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The Nation.

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BAILOUT NATION

OCTOBER 13, 2008
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Exchange

Vets & Their Families Speak Out

East Orange, N.J.
Thank you so very much for shedding light on my brother Juan Jimenez's plight [Joshua Kors, "How the VA Abandons Our Vets," Sept. 15]. I know his story is shared by many veterans. Juan had the courage, the tenacity and the desire to have his story heard. He will forever be my hero. Juan embodies courage, strength, compassion, passion and a strong desire for justice—especially when it comes to his Army brothers. Again, from the bottom of my heart and the depths of my soul, I thank you.
Laura Jimenez Burroughs

Avondale, Ariz.
I read about Sgt. Juan Jimenez and the VA. This is the same thing I have been fighting as a Veterans Service Officer for the Marine Corps and Veterans of Foreign Wars. No one wants to take us seriously, and the VA continues to run us over. There is a high concern for Iraq veterans (and there should be), but we are forgetting our World War II, Korea and Vietnam veterans. We need to put the train back on the track and force the VA to listen to us and care for us. I need help for the radiation veterans, for the Navy WWII vet who was sunk in the Pacific and ignored by the VA. I wish I was capable of yelling and having people in America hear me. Help us turn Veterans Affairs around to the needs of the Veterans!
Richard Quintana-Sena

Hanahan, S.C.
I feel abandoned by the VA also, although my story is different. I served in the USAF from 1962 to '65 and had an honorable discharge. I retired from my civilian job at 62. I applied for care at the VA and was *rejected*. They said it's because I have money saved to retire on. I have had to get health insurance through the state pool for $2,800 *a month*. What happened to my so-called GI benefits? Will they not allow my burial in a military cemetery either?
Steven Brown

Austin, Tex.
"How the VA Abandons Our Vets" hits the nail on the head. Older vets are getting the same treatment. My husband served twenty-three years in the Air Force—Korea, Japan, France and two tours in Vietnam. I finally talked him into going to the VA to try to get his disability upped from 10 percent. The VA denied his claim. My husband has Alzheimer's disease and is soon going to need more care than I can give him. He doesn't want to pursue his claim, as he thinks the VA may take his 10 percent disability away. All veterans deserve to be treated with dignity and compassion. They certainly are not getting it from the VA.
Paula French

Los Gatos, Calif.
I am a Navy veteran who cares deeply about her service to the country during Vietnam and her service now to veterans who come to the VA. I often read your magazine. However, Joshua Kors's article makes me re-evaluate everything you publish. Like Kors, I sat through two weeks of the VA trial he wrote about. Unlike Kors, I saw both sides of the story. Whatever happened to balanced journalism? This story couldn't have been more distorted and at times simply wrong. Shame on Kors and shame on *The Nation* for not demanding balanced and fair reporting.
Kerri Childress, *VA spokeswoman*

Parrish, Ala.
My husband filed a claim for PTSD in 1983 and passed away in 1989. For six years the VA failed to assist him with this claim. We had two teenage children, and I was told not to file for them because by the time the claim got processed they would have reached their majority. I have been through numerous hearings and cases. I have been given wrong information. After years of fighting, service-connected death was finally granted, but I am still battling the VA for his accrued benefits. The bottom line with the VA is deny, deny, deny and maybe the veterans

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Bailout Nation

It is rare that this magazine has occasion to cite approvingly the words of a reactionary Republican like Jim Bunning of Kentucky. But when faced with the audacious attempt by the Bush administration to bail out its Wall Street allies with $700 billion in the citizens' money, Senator Bunning was succinct and correct: "The free market for all intents and purposes is dead in America." To which we would only add: this realization couldn't come soon enough.

The administration's proposal to buy up Wall Street's garbage didn't so much kill the free market as make clear that it is largely a convenient fiction. While conservatives have invoked market fundamentalist dogma in defense of their thirty-five-year class war against working Americans, the fact is they've turned to the state for bailouts, contracts and special favors at nearly every turn. The result is less a night watchman state than a cat burglar one. At least now the mechanics of the heist have been laid bare. With ardent free marketeers like former Goldman Sachs CEO Henry Paulson publicly throwing in the towel, we preserve hope that this crisis will finally retire the neoliberal era.

The unlikely and unpredictable cross-ideological alliances that have formed in response to the bailout show that the central philosophical debate is shifting: it is no longer about the size of government, for there will be more government in the years to come. The question is, What kind of government intervention will we have, and, most important, Whom will it benefit? Will the final contours of this bailout bring us "Goldman Sachs socialism," as William Greider calls it on page 5, or more democratic financial governance? With so many facets to the crisis and the debate on Capitol Hill in flux as we go to press, a comprehensive view is impossible. Instead we asked a range of observers for their views about what this crisis means and how we ought to confront it. As journalists, writers and thinkers, we welcome this new debate. As political actors and citizens, we embrace this new battle. —*The Editors*

Crisis of a Gilded Age

by DOUG HENWOOD

It looks like someday finally arrived.

For the past two or three decades skeptics watched as deregulated finance got ever more reckless, as the gap between rich and poor widened to a chasm not seen since the turn of the last century, and they said, "Someday there's going to be hell to pay for all this." But despite a few nasty hiccups every few years—the 1987 stock market crash, the savings and loan debacle of the late 1980s, the Mexican and Asian financial crises of the mid-1990s, the dot-com bust of the early 2000s—somehow the economy regained its footing for another game of chicken. Has its luck finally run out?

It might seem odd to link the current financial crisis with the long-term polarization of incomes, but in fact the two are deeply connected. During the housing bubble, people borrowed heavily not only to buy houses (whose prices were rising out of reach of their incomes) but also to compensate for the weakest job and income growth of any expansion since the end of World War II. Between 2001 and 2007, homeowners withdrew almost $5 trillion in cash from their houses, either by borrowing against their equity or pocketing the proceeds of sales; such equity withdrawals, as they're called, accounted for 30 percent of the growth in consumption over that six-year period. That extra lift disguised the labor market's underlying weakness; without it, the 2001 recession might never have ended.

But that round of borrowing only extended one that had begun in the early 1980s. At first it was credit cards, but when the housing boom really got going around 2001, the mortgage market took the lead. Now households are up to their ears in debt, and the credit markets are broken.

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Winning the debate

VIDEO NATION

McCain's age card

THE SHORT OF IT

From Mao to *moi*

Borrowing is only one side of the story. As incomes polarized, America's rich and the financial institutions that serve them found their portfolios bulging with cash in need of a profitable investment outlet, and one of the outlets they found was lending to those below them on the income ladder. (That's one of several places where all the cash that funded the credit card and mortgage borrowing came from.) They also poured their money into hedge funds, private equity funds and just plain old stocks and bonds. That twenty-five-year gusher of cash led to an enormous expansion in the financial markets. Total financial assets of all kinds (stocks, bonds, everything) averaged around 440 percent of GDP from the early 1950s through the late 1970s. They grew steadily, breaking 600 percent in 1990 and 1,000 percent by 2007. With a few notorious interruptions, it looked like Wall Street had entered a utopia: an eternal bull market. Regulators stopped regulating and auditors looked the other way as financial practices lost all traces of prudence. No figure embodies that negligence better than Alan Greenspan, who as chair of the Federal Reserve dropped the propensity to caution and worry characteristic of the central banking profession and instead cheered the markets onward. As he said many times in the 1990s and early 2000s, who was he, a mere mortal, to second-guess the collective wisdom of the markets? He seemed to have no sense that markets embody no collective wisdom and often act with all the careful consideration of a mob.

So while the proximate cause, as the lawyers say, of the current financial crisis is the bursting of the housing bubble and the souring of so much of the mortgage debt that financed it, that's really only part of a much larger story. And while it's inevitable that the government is going to have to spend hundreds of billions to repair the damage over the next few years, there's a lot more that needs to be done over the longer term.

This is the point where it's irresistibly tempting to call for a re-regulation of finance. And that is sorely needed. But we also need to remember why finance, like many other areas of economic life, was deregulated starting in the 1970s. From the point of view of the elite, corporate profits were too low, workers were too demanding and the hand of government was too heavy. Deregulation was part of a broad assault to make the economy more "flexible," which translated into stagnant to declining wages and rising job insecurity for most Americans. And the medicine worked, from the elites' point of view. Corporate profitability rose dramatically from the early 1980s until sometime last year. The polarization of incomes wasn't an unwanted side effect of the medicine—it was part of the cure.

Although we're hearing a lot now about how the Reagan era is over and the era of big government is back, an expanded government isn't likely to do much more than rescue a failing financial system (in addition to the more familiar pursuits of waging war and jailing people). Nothing more humane will be pursued without a far more energized populace than we have. After this financial crisis and the likely bailout, it looks impossible to go back to the status quo ante—but we don't seem ready to move on to something appealingly new yet, either.

Doug Henwood, a Nation contributing editor, is the editor of Left Business Observer.

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Goldman Sachs Socialism

by WILLIAM GREIDER

Wall Street put a gun to the head of the politicians and said, Give us the money—right now—or take the blame for whatever follows. The audacity of Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson's original bailout proposal was reflected in what it refused to say: no explanation of how the bailout would work, no demands on the bankers in exchange for the public's money. Treasury's summary of the plan included this chilling statement: "Section 8. Review. Decisions by the Secretary pursuant to the authority of this Act are nonreviewable and committed to agency discretion, and may not be reviewed by any court of law or any administrative agency." In other words, no lawsuits by aggrieved investors or taxpayers allowed. No complaints later from ignorant pols who didn't know what they voted for. Take it or leave it, suckers.

Both political parties may submit to this extortion because bending over for Wall Street instruction, their usual posture, seems less risky than taking responsibility. Paulson and Federal Reserve chair Ben Bernanke exerted intimidating pressure because previous efforts to restore investor confidence had failed, as their slapdash interventions worsened the panic. And the Fed was running out of money. Nearly three-fifths of its $800 billion portfolio is now loaded with junk, the mortgage securities and other rotten assets it took off Wall Street balance sheets.

Despite its size, the gargantuan bailout is still designed for the narrow purpose of relieving the major banks and investment houses, in the hope that this will restore order to economic life. There are lots of reasons it will fail. Washington's money might pull firms back from the brink, but that does not guarantee that banks will resume normal lending, much less capital investing. Likewise, global investors have been burned and may refuse to pump more capital into the wobbly house of American finance.

Secrecy and opacity are crucial to achieve Wall Street's purposes and could allow Paulson to overpay his old pals for near-worthless assets, thus allowing them to recapitalize the damaged banks while telling the public and politicians the money will save the system. To achieve this, Wall Street needs to keep control of the process, whoever is elected president. Not everyone will be saved, of course, but high on the list of endangered nameplates is Goldman Sachs, Paulson's old firm, and Morgan Stanley. These high-flying investment houses looked to be doomed by recent events, so the Fed quickly agreed to convert them into banks. Then Warren Buffett put up $5 billion to aid Goldman but smartly protected himself from loss. Politicians should tell Wall Street, "We want the same deal Buffett got." Think of Paulson's solution as Goldman Sachs socialism.

If Paulson's gamble fails, the government might finally undertake forceful intervention rather than friendly solicitude for Wall Street. Washington should take literal control of the banking and finance sector and employ emergency powers to direct these private enterprises. Cut off from public assistance any bankers who do not wish to play. Then government can exercise temporary supervisory powers that force the banks to cooperate with recovery by sustaining lending and investment to the real economy. Order full stop to the many financial gimmicks and accounting illusions that led to inflated lending and falsified asset valuations. Unwind the complicated time bombs known as credit derivatives and shut down this line of business. Meanwhile, instead of throwing millions of homeowners and debtors out of their homes and into bankruptcy, hold them harmless temporarily so people can work out reasonable recovery terms. Finally, force-feed new life into the real economy with government spending on public projects and capital formation. How much spending? Rescuing America from irresponsible Wall Street is worth at least what it costs to save the bloodied bankers.

Reining in the Risk Takers

by NOMI PRINS

Wall Street compensation is legendary. Nowhere on earth can one borrow so much to profit so excessively for creating so little. A few exceedingly wealthy and powerful men come from one spawning ground, Goldman Sachs. Their hands should be slapped first. Topping the list is Treasury Secretary Paulson, former CEO of Goldman Sachs. Paulson has overshadowed the Federal Reserve, becoming the arbiter of who lives and dies on Wall Street. To date, two of Goldman Sachs's major competitors, Bear Stearns and Lehman Brothers, are dead. A third, Merrill Lynch, was handed to commercial banking giant Bank of America, which saved its stock from free fall. Meanwhile, if he succeeds, Paulson will have maneuvered the greatest transfer of risk ever from Wall Street to Washington, at a tally of $1.2 trillion or more.

Then there's John Thain, co-president of Goldman Sachs under Paulson. Thain left Goldman to run the New York Stock Exchange before taking the helm of Merrill Lynch in December for a package that included $15 million in cash. There, Thain hired another Goldmanite, Thomas Montag, for a total compensation package of $90 million (including a sign-on bonus of $39.4 million). Soon to be one of the greatest Wall Street titans of all, current Goldman CEO Lloyd Blankfein bagged $53.4 million in 2006, making him one of the highest-paid executives on Wall Street. In 2007 he made $67.9 million, including $26.8 million in cash.

The refrain on Wall Street is that it takes big bucks to attract and retain "top talent." CEOs moan that if their stock takes a hit, so does their net wealth, but there's always more left to soften the blow. After Bear Stearns's demise, former chair Jimmy Cayne still received, for holdings once worth $1 billion, a cool $61.3 million.

Democrats in Congress are seeking to tie Paulson's bailout package to checks on excessive Wall Street executive compensation. Of course, reining in outrageous pay packages is a top priority, particularly during this period of lightning-quick decisions to bail out Wall Street because of its self-induced losses. But a more effective response than direct caps on compensation would be tying compensation to risk levels. A risk-related compensation cap could link the maximum annual cash compensation to the level of risk the firm takes on relative to the capital reserves it has to back that risk. This would be a way of imposing a check on Wall Street pay while helping to stabi-

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lize the unregulated and systemic risk that permeates our financial system.

Compensation certainly fuels Wall Street's greed, but it's not just individual speculation at the top that needs controlling; it's the speculation throughout the entire system. Rather than allowing the creation of larger and riskier entities, like Bank of America–Merrill Lynch—or the newly converted bank holding companies Goldman Sachs and Morgan Stanley—we need a reclassification of Wall Street along the lines of the Glass-Steagall Act. Instead of the monsters being created, we should promote smaller, more heavily regulated financial institutions that pose less risk not just to investors but to taxpayers.

Nomi Prins (www.nomiprins.com), a former investment banker, is a senior fellow at Demos and the author of Other People's Money *and* Jacked.

King George & Comrade Paulson

by RALPH NADER

Many years ago my father asked his children in a dinner-table conversation, "Why will capitalism always survive?" His answer: "Because socialism will always be used to save it."

The cause of the financial markets meltdown is simple: powerful greed fanned by fraud and reckless risk transfers. Wall Street wanted something for nothing. This fairy tale was written by an army of Wall Street lobbyists who tore down regulations and safeguards meant to protect savers and shareholders.

The financial black belts who made billions from this Ponzi scheme deserve the brunt of law enforcement. But deregulation meant there was very little law, much less enforcement. Instead, the socialist superman has swept down to New York City from Washington to bail out casino capitalism on Wall Street, which is spewing forth ever more kryptonite.

Every time Congress has acted in haste, it has led to a boondoggle, from the $3 billion synthetic fuels legislation of 1980 to the Iraq War resolution of 2002. Without public hearings, without safeguards, accountability and Congressional oversight, without comprehensive regulation and shareholder governance, King George and Comrade Paulson's $700 billion blank check of cash for trash will be the goliath of domestic panic legislation.

Slow down, Hank!

§ Taxpayers must get prudent participation for taking the risk of bailing out Wall Street (the bill for which is edging up to $1.6 trillion), ideally in the form of stock warrants.

§ Homeowners and neighborhoods must be protected by passing a law with a sunset clause allowing below-median-value homeowners facing foreclosure the right to rent-to-own their homes at fair-market-value rates.

§ Conflicts of interest must be reduced by taking away the power of auditor and credit-rating-agency selection from companies and placing it in the hands of the Securities and Exchange Commission, to be administered on random assignment.

§ Accountability must be restored to financial markets by introducing covered bonds for the majority of mortgage products as they do in Western Europe, which prevents originators of mortgages from passing the buck.

§ And before the taxpayer gambles on bailing out Wall Street, we need to implement restraints on Wall Street's dangerous habit of gambling with other people's money. This should start with a securities-speculation tax and effective margin requirements to refocus the financial markets on their proper function.

Ralph Nader, the longtime consumer advocate, is running for president as an independent.

Calvin Trillin, Deadline Poet

John McCain Explains What He Meant by Saying That the Fundamentals of the Economy Are Strong

The fundamentals are strong, my friends. The fundamentals are strong.

The Democrats don't go along, my friends, but they're the ones who are wrong.

Because what that word really means, my friends, is our great American workers.

So anyone saying I'm wrong, my friends, is saying our workers are shirkers.

So trust me to sort this all out, my friends. I've been in Congress the longest.

American workers are strong, my friends. And those in the swing states are strongest.

Bail Out Working Families

by THEA M. LEE

Working families have experienced decades of stagnant wages and eroding healthcare and pensions. Median incomes have still not recovered from the recession of 2001, and now taxpayers are being asked to foot a gargantuan bill for economic excesses we never enjoyed. As Congress and the administration fumble around for a solution to the credit crisis, here are a few principles that should guide any final outcome:

1. Don't waste our tax dollars. We need that money for comprehensive healthcare reform and clean, renewable energy, among other things. Of course, we need independent oversight of any expenditures and an equity stake in any participating companies. We should also consider imposing a tax on financial transactions, which could raise about $100 billion annually.

2. Don't pay off the perps. When Democrats rightly proposed limiting executive compensation as a condition of any

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bailout, Secretary Paulson actually said that this might discourage participation. It can't be that big a financial crisis if execs would rather forfeit the aid than give back a chunk of excessive compensation.

3. Help homeowners stay in their homes.

4. Rebuild the real economy. It should be obvious that you can't run a consumer economy on debt and low wages. We need a second economic stimulus package that extends unemployment benefits, provides aid to cities and states, and creates good jobs by rebuilding crumbling schools, roads, bridges and water systems. In the medium term (next year!), we should enact the Employee Free Choice Act, so that more workers can join unions and bargain for their fair share of the wealth they create.

5. Re-regulate our financial sector, so we don't end up right back where we started.

Thea M. Lee is policy director of the AFL-CIO.

Ending Casino Capitalism

by ROBERT POLLIN

Wall Street is begging for government life support. Unfortunately, we need to acquiesce to avoid another 1930s-style Depression. But Wall Street has to accept in return a revived regulatory system that would promote financial stability and the well-being of the majority. Here are four observations and proposals, intended to apply to all US financial markets and institutions, whether banks, holding companies, hedge funds or variations thereof:

1. The bailout doesn't have to cost taxpayers $700 billion. The most cost-effective way to finance the bailout is for the Federal Reserve, not the Treasury, to buy the bad debt from distressed financial institutions. If the Fed, as opposed to the Treasury, buys the bad debt, the funds don't come out of taxpayers' pockets but from the Fed's power to create money. This may seem like alchemy. But in fact it is simply a variation on what the Fed does normally—in conducting day-to-day monetary policy and in managing financial crises. Last year the Fed bought $840 billion in government bonds outright from US banks. As recently as September 19, the Fed announced plans to purchase short-term debt obligations issued by Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac and the federal home loan banks as a way to "further support market functioning." The Fed can later resell the bad debt to private dealers, albeit at distress-level, cut-rate prices. In any case, the funds to transact these operations will not have to come from taxpayers.

2. Tax speculators. A small sales tax on all securities transactions—stocks, bonds, derivatives, mortgage-backed securities, short sales and all new schemes—would raise the costs of speculative trading and therefore discourage casino capitalism. At the same time, the tax will not discourage investors who intend to hold securities for a longer period since unlike the speculators they will be trading infrequently. This tax could generate, conservatively, $100 billion per year in government revenue—enough to cover, for example, a green investment program that could create 2 million new jobs.

3. Impose asset-based reserve requirements. These force financial institutions to maintain cash reserve funds in proportion to the riskier assets in their portfolios. They can discourage firms from holding excessive amounts of risky assets and serve as a cash cushion to draw on when market downturns occur. The same principle guides the margin requirements that apply to stocks purchased with borrowed funds. During the late 1990s, Federal Reserve chair Alan Greenspan acknowledged that he could have dampened the stock market bubble by raising margin requirements, but he refused to take action. Measures like these can also push financial institutions to channel credit to projects that advance social welfare. Policy-makers could stipulate that, say, at least 5 percent of banks' loan portfolios be channeled to low-cost housing and 5 percent to green investments. If the banks fail to reach these quotas, they would then be required to hold this same amount of their total assets in cash.

4. Loan guarantees for priority productive investments. Financial bailouts are a form of credit risk insurance for reckless speculators. Instead we need to provide credit risk insurance—i.e., loan guarantees—to promote social priorities like affordable housing and green investments. Investments in these areas will expand. The securities sales tax and asset reserve requirements should prevent speculators from converting such initiatives into new casino opportunities. As such, the overall costs to taxpayers would be small.

Robert Pollin is a professor of economics and co-director of the Political Economy Research Institute (PERI) at the University of Massachusetts. He was a member of the Capital Formation Subcouncil of the US Competitiveness Policy Council in the 1990s. His books include The Macroeconomics of Saving, Finance, and Investment, *of which he is the editor.*

Bridge Loan to Nowhere?

by THOMAS FERGUSON and ROBERT JOHNSON

Henry Paulson and Ben Bernanke's bailout plan is not only the most expensive; it is also the most likely to fail. But there is more than one way to restore trust and restart markets. First, take a leaf from the New Deal. That is, just send bank examiners into all the institutions—investment houses and insurance companies, as well as banks—to assess them. Insolvent ones are closed; everyone knows then that those that survive are solvent. Economic life restarts. The total cost to taxpayers is minimal.

Guess why Wall Street hates this one and why Bernanke and Paulson do not even consider it. In all likelihood much of the Street is insolvent, which is why short-sellers were going wild until the SEC restricted them.

A second way is for the government to inject capital directly into those financial institutions with a reasonable prospect of surviving in the long run. This was the essence of Senator Chuck Schumer's proposal, which surfaced just ahead of Paulson's announcement. The New Deal did this, too. It used the Reconstruction Finance Corporation, which put severe terms on banks receiving aid. Wall Street, of course, would love the money but not the terms. Somebody to inspect and certify the solvency of financial houses is also prerequisite for this option, which is anathema to the Street.

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Finally, there is Bernanke and Paulson's choice. Just have the government buy the junk, giving Wall Street real money—our money—in exchange for it. Notice three points about this one. First, the lucky firms continue merrily in business; the Paulson plan, thus far, pays only lip service to reforms. Second, there is the truly alarming likelihood that $700 billion will not be enough. Estimates of the amount of junk out there vary, but the key point is that most financial experts have consistently underestimated the problem, and there is no reason to believe their forecasting has improved. Third, the draft plan is silent on the prices at which assets are to be bought and, presumably later, resold, raising the possibility of sweetheart deals.

It is vital that Congress insist on reasonable terms for the public. For example, the government could take equity in the firms it bails out, which can be sold later at a profit. We prefer this method to warrants, which are rights to buy shares at a low price that ensures a gain if and when they are finally exercised; in past bailouts, firms like Chrysler pressured the government not to exercise such warrants.

To recapture some of the broader market gains flowing from the injection of public money, one could place a modest new tax on interest and dividends. "Carried interest," the ludicrous special tax break for private equity that not only Republicans but Schumer and other Democratic leaders continue to defend, should go as part of any deal on a bailout.

And finally, obviously, it is necessary to re-regulate. The details might require time to work out, but handing out money before nailing down reforms is too dangerous. Congress should legislate, with a promise to fix details later. If Wall Street doesn't like it, it doesn't have to accept the money.

Thomas Ferguson is a professor of political science at the University of Massachusetts, Boston. Robert Johnson, a former managing director at Soros Funds Management, is chief economist of the Senate Banking Committee.

Trust But Verify

by JAMES K. GALBRAITH and WILLIAM K. BLACK

"These are the days of miracles and wonders." The market has collapsed! Only the government can save us now! Thirty years of cant have evaporated. Suddenly, we're all in it together—Henry Paulson and Ben Bernanke in the lead, Congress pulling like postpartisan galley slaves, George W. Bush lying low and looking, no doubt fervently, for the exits.

Something must be done—but on what terms? Treasury proposes to spend $700 billion to buy mortgage-backed securities, accountable to no one. Paulson asks for trust. But has he earned it? Remember, he started out in office gutting the Sarbanes-Oxley Act; he tried to cripple the SEC and recently relied on Morgan Stanley—not a disinterested party—for advice on the nationalization of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. Therefore "trust but verify," as Ronald Reagan would (and did) say.

Congress must impose conditions to protect the public, the national interest and, not least, the interests of the next administration. Herewith a short list:

1. *Disclosure clause*. Treasury should have immediate and complete access to information about portfolios, counterparties, the internal valuation methods used by financial firms, their proprietary models and the history of adjustments made to those models to recognize or conceal losses as the crisis unfolded.

2. *Pricing clause*. Treasury should establish a transparent mechanism to establish a before-the-bailout fair market value for mortgage-backed securities, set limits on the premium paid over that value and require that financial institutions value their full portfolios at the sale price. In other words, concealment of losses—"accounting forbearance"—should be prohibited.

3. *Fraud clause*. Securities purchased should be reviewed, and those found to be based on fraudulent appraisals, inadequate documentation, predatory and other abusive practices should be kicked back to the lenders at a penalty rate.

4. *Enforcement clause*. Treasury should be required to establish a framework for investigations and criminal referrals and to prove that it is in aggressive use. Participating firms should be required to investigate and document past frauds, establish internal anti-fraud controls and make criminal referrals as necessary. The FBI and assistant US Attorneys should get "blank check" authorization to pursue the crimes behind this debacle.

5. *Arbitrage clause*. One big danger of Paulson's plan is that non-US institutions, hedge funds and others will seize the chance to sell their bad holdings to eligible US institutions, replenishing the swamp just as the Treasury seeks to drain it. All US financial institutions should be required to provide baseline information on their mortgage-backed securities and other eligible holdings as of September 15.

6. *Transparency clause*. Treasury operations under this plan, including communications and consultation with outside advisers, should be transparent to Congress, which should get whatever information it wants, at regular intervals. No exceptions.

7. *Crony clause*. This program must be run by people who are free of conflicts of interest. To ensure this the Treasury should require full financial disclosure for anyone hired to administer the program, and impose rules to enforce a strict conflict code. Special note to Congress: John McCain personifies the crony system. Do not pass a bill that would give him, as president, unfettered control over how this program is run.

8. *Modification and disposal clause*. As foreclosures mount, Treasury will end up with physical properties, which degrade rapidly if not sold or rented and occupied. To prevent this, an agency should be established to rapidly modify mortgage contracts; manage rental conversions; and lease, sell or demolish vacated homes. The agency can be run as draft boards were in wartime, by citizens in each community under federal guidelines.

Is this all? No, it's only a start. Other measures must follow, including regulatory reform, mortgage relief, revenue sharing to protect state and local public spending as property tax revenues tank, support for public capital investment and job creation. But this is the agenda for the next administration.

Getting to that next administration is the job for the American people.

James K. Galbraith, author of The Predator State, *teaches at the University of Texas. William K. Black, author of* The Best Way to Rob a Bank Is to Own One, *teaches at the University of Missouri. A former regulator, he blew the whistle on the Keating Five.*

(*continued on page 24*)

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Alexander Cockburn

Last Act, Great Opportunity

As in the final reel of the old-fashioned Hollywood cliffhangers, it's a race against time. Will Congress stiffen its spine, face down Paulson's blackmail and tell him there'll be no $700 billion on his terms?

Will a decisive chunk of the American electorate decide that between a half-mad former POW tormented with PTSD and dying of melanoma and a stable, centrist, Harvard-educated half-black man, they'd better trust their basic instincts and go with the all-white nut who might well blow up the planet? Rush Limbaugh's line, also featured on the *Wall Street Journal*'s September 22 editorial page, is that the real culprits in this crisis are the blacks. You see, the Community Reinvestment Act, designed in the Carter era to encourage minority homeownership, was pushed by Clinton, who coaxed into being the necessary subprime loans. The blacks took the subprime loans and then couldn't make the payments and set Wall Street on course for disaster.

People say hopefully that Obama is sharpening up his game. It's partly true. We're getting less of the high-flown paeans to hope, a bit more pith amid the wind. But since things are breaking his way, at least in these predebate days, he's a lot more demure than the edgy popular mood.

Americans have been living in a casino economy for years. It's a style of life ingrained in the national psyche. But at the prospect of a long-term losing run they are getting frightened and angry, fast. Congress knows it could be facing voters who can see what's coming over the horizon when the Treasury bails out Wall Street. The shriveled health benefits they now have will shrivel further. Their 401(k)s are shot to hell. Pretty soon they'll be told that the trillion or so going to Wall Street means that taxes will go up, that the Social Security trust funds are the target of renewed attack.

Prudence aside, how can Obama set his match to the tinder of popular rage and fear when he has Robert Rubin and Lawrence Summers standing beside him, rage-and-blame extinguishers at the ready? True, at *his* elbow McCain has Phil Gramm, an altogether nastier human package. Gramm—a former Democrat, be it noted—was the prime Republican force pushing through the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act in 1999. It repealed the old and admittedly leaky Glass-Steagall Act, passed during the Great Depression, which prohibited a commercial bank from being in the investment and insurance business. President Clinton cheerfully signed Gramm's act into law.

A year later Gramm, chairman of the Senate Banking Committee, attached a 262-page amendment to an omnibus appropriations bill right before a recess. The amendment received no scrutiny and duly became the Commodity Futures Modernization Act, which OK'd deregulation of investment banks, exempting most over-the-counter derivatives, credit derivatives and credit default swaps from regulatory scrutiny.

This is all true, but it omits the contribution of the Democrats to deregulation, which—naturally enough, since this was the Clinton era—was decisive. What was the Democratic Leadership Council, of whom Clinton and Gore were prime adornments, about but pushing through deregulation on the agenda of the banking industry? Look at the 2001 *Economic Report of the President*, the last one written under Clinton. It was unequivocal in dismissing Glass-Steagall and touting the virtues of financial deregulation: "those rules are not needed today.... These steps allow consolidation in the financial sector that will result in efficiency gains and provide new services for consumers."

You want a symbol of Wall Street's corruption? Who better than Rubin, formerly of Goldman Sachs, a major player behind the Glass-Steagall repeal and a prime beneficiary of its demise, since he skipped from his Treasury position to run the newly merged investment/commercial banking conglomerate Citigroup?

On September 22 Jesse Jackson gave a little press conference in lower Manhattan, at Exchange and Broad Streets in the financial district. JoAnn Wypijewski sent me a description. There were maybe fifty people, which is apparently what Jackson had expected. Six years ago Ralph Nader and the Green Party were down there in the same spot for a campaign event. The place was packed, and there were loudspeakers and Patti Smith was the opening act. Nader was saying then a lot of what Jackson is saying now: about the runaway train of Wall Street, the deregulation that was going to exact payback at some point, the extreme gap in wealth and the redistribution upward.

Six years later the Green Party is a joke. There is less organization than there was when Nader ran in 2000, and Nader is less of a presence than he was then, these days a lone, partyless individual, albeit a famous one. The 2000 campaign built nothing, just as, in the end, Jesse's campaigns in the '80s built nothing. What an irony! Now is the moment to kick neoliberalism into the grave. We won't get another chance like this in our lifetimes to swing the pendulum the other way.

Obama has fired up the young people with appeals to hope. But as he polls over 50 percent for the first time on day three of the bailout hearings, he clearly deems it too rash to try to ignore a populist constituency. His proposed conditions on the bailout have been very tame. He's frightened of setting a match to the tinder and thinks it's seemly to have Rubin, Summers and Volcker stand next to him. Those are his natural instincts anyway. The irony is that it's McCain's demagoguery about hanging the chairman of the SEC that's shoved Obama a bit to the left. In extremis McCain will say and do anything. He put Sarah Palin on the ticket. Maybe now he'll propose an FDR-type New Deal and Obama will have to raise the ante and start sounding like a real leader who can seize the opportunity presented by this crisis, which the gods have offered him with such perfect timing. ■

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Katha Pollitt

Sarah Palin, Affirmative Action Babe

Ah, meritocracy! Not so long ago, conservatives had a lock on it: no affirmative action, no A's for effort, no competitions where everyone gets a prize. People who complained that racism or sexism or any other ism was holding them back were whiners looking for excuses. They either didn't want to work hard or, as Charles Murray claimed in *The Bell Curve*, they weren't smart enough to make the grade.

Well, never mind. Sarah Palin has done for meritocracy what she's done for those other conservative obsessions: working mothers (you go, girl!), teen pregnancy (a challenge!), masculine authority (the first dude?)—to say nothing of gravitas, statesmanship, wisdom and all those other weighty abstract nouns George Will likes to talk about. "I'm in love. Truly and deeply in love," Murray told the *New York Times*'s Deborah Solomon. "The last thing we need are more pointy-headed intellectuals running the government." Palin is new, young, attractive, charismatic, a natural speaker. She's a fascinating combination of opposites—relatable (horrible word) and down to earth but also intense and weirdly thrilling—half Rachael Ray, half Boudicca, a warrior mom. Feminist triumph or feminist nightmare? Maybe both! She's hot in all senses of the word. If she wasn't a big reactionary, she'd make a fantastic community organizer.

But let's be real: there is just no way Sarah Palin is equipped to be vice president, much less president. She doesn't know enough; she lacks the necessary grasp of, and curiosity about, our complex world; her political philosophy could fit on a bumper sticker: Us versus Them. The lack of stamps in her recently acquired passport has been much noted (yes, I know, Bill Kristol, Lincoln was not a big traveler, either); it isn't even clear she's well acquainted with the Lower 48. She's prepping for her debate with Joe Biden like a student jock cramming for a test. The McCain campaign, tacitly acknowledging how out of her depth she'll be no matter how many all-nighters she pulls, demanded—and, shockingly, got—special modifications to the veep debate format so that there would be no follow-up questions. After all, it wouldn't be right to expect Palin to compete on normal terms with Joe Biden, who has the totally unfair advantage of being deeply versed in domestic and foreign policy and knowing how the world's business is done. Lower standards for potential leaders of the world's most powerful country, in the name of diversity: that's what Republicans stand for now.

Hillary Clinton said her campaign put 18 million cracks in the glass ceiling; Sarah Palin, adding that "the women of America aren't finished yet"—as if women had stormed the barricades to nominate her—claimed her election would "shatter the glass ceiling once and for all." That's ridiculous. The glass ceiling is the invisible barrier of gender prejudice that prevents women, as a class, from rising to the level that their qualifications and abilities merit—the level they would reach if they were men. Like her or not, Hillary Clinton was more than equipped to run the United States; her nomination would have been a true glass-ceiling breakthrough. But Palin's only qualification for the second or, God forbid, the first job in the land is that John McCain thought she'd lend his sagging campaign a shot of estrogen and some right-wing Christian fairy dust.

Whether or not the gambit succeeds, it has nothing to do with recognizing accomplishment, experience or even steady old boring competence. Just ask McCain's gaffe-prone economic adviser Carly Fiorina, ushered off the stage after she pointed out that Sarah Palin couldn't run a major corporation; Fiorina, who was fired as CEO of Hewlett Packard after a fairly disastrous tenure, ought to know. Or ask Olympia Snowe, Susan Collins, Condoleezza Rice, Hawaii Governor Linda Lingle or the many other Republican women McCain could have chosen had he cared about governing. As has been known to happen in less exalted workplaces, Palin got the promotion because the boss just liked her. She will do no more to shatter the glass ceiling for other women as a group than such women usually do.

There's an upside, in that the old attack on Obama as a lightweight who is inexperienced and overreaching has all but vanished. Plus, there's the fun of watching conservative pundits scramble to deny the obvious. "There are Republicans who are unhappy about John McCain's selection of Sarah Palin," acknowledged William Kristol in his September 1 column. "Many are insiders who highly value—who overly value—'experience.'" Ah yes, experience. What is that, anyway? My people choose their leaders by inspecting the entrails of chickens, and the gods have always multiplied our herds! Besides, as Rush Limbaugh said recently, "She'll be surrounded by a sea of advisers." Hmmm, where did I hear *that* before? Was it not in 2000, when doubts were raised about whether George W. Bush could handle the job?

The stress on high-end conservative pundits is beginning to show. These are people, after all, who belong to the Ivy-educated, latte-drinking, Tuscan-vacationing urban elite they love to ridicule and who see themselves, however deludedly, as policy intellectuals and grown-ups. They've written endlessly about "excellence" and "standards." McCain's erratic flounderings, and Palin's patent absurdity, have driven David Brooks and George Will to write columns so anguished I'd feel sorry for them had they not made their bed by spending the past eight years rationalizing the obvious inadequacies of George W. Bush.

I want the people running the country to be smarter and wiser and more judicious and more knowledgeable than I am. If that's elitism, count me in.

* * *

Learning to Drive and Other Life Stories, my collection of personal essays, is just out in paperback. Visit kathapollitt.com for ten questions to kick off your book club discussion and for info on how to reach me to get involved. ■

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PALIN'S PARTY

The GOP's veep nominee has become the ultimate Christian-right success story.

by MICHELLE GOLDBERG

Wasilla, Alaska

Pat O'Hara, a journalist who served on the Wasilla school board for twelve years, remembers how the religious right made her feel like a stranger in her own community. The Mat-Su Valley, which includes the neighboring towns of Wasilla and Palmer, had once been a libertarian sort of place, full of blue-collar individualists who didn't fit in elsewhere. "I had the dog team in the woods, the cabin in the woods. My friends were teachers, farmers, construction workers," she said as she stood with about 1,500 demonstrators at a September 13 anti–Sarah Palin rally in Anchorage. "It was kind of a working, very much Democratic community. And then it changed."

The Valley, Alaska's fastest-growing region, is a spectacular area of lakes and birch and spruce forests, surrounded by granite-colored snowcapped mountains that poke through the clouds. Palmer has a community core, a walkable few blocks with a lively coffee shop, Vagabond Blues. Wasilla, though, has developed as a sprawl of strip malls containing a mix of pawnshops, gun shops and chain stores—and, incongruously, a decent sushi place, with a Korean chef from California. It is a little piece of the American South near the North Pole, rough-hewn but slowly upscaling.

It wasn't until the 1990s that local churches like the Wasilla Assembly of God, which Palin grew up attending, became aggressively political. A few years before Palin became mayor, a group of preachers confronted the school board with questions about social issues that had never before surfaced in local politics, according to O'Hara, who wrote first for the *Mat-Su Valley Frontiersman* and then for the *Anchorage Daily News*. "They started asking me, 'Would you allow a homosexual to teach in schools?' and 'Do you favor abortion?'" she said. "At the time, I didn't know what was coming. I said, 'This is not a school board issue. We have overcrowding. We have funding problems.'" The last time O'Hara ran, conservative pastors mounted an effort to defeat her, saying she favored hiring homosexuals, but they failed. Nevertheless, in 1996, feeling increasingly alienated in a place she'd lived for twenty-five years, she quit the school board and moved to more liberal Anchorage.

"The whole community changed," she said. "It became extremely rigid and intolerant, and you can see that in every election since." Palin, said O'Hara, "represents the worst of those values. She feels that because she's a member of the right church, she's chosen by God to inflict her values on everyone."

With her vice presidential nomination, Sarah Palin has become the ultimate religious-right success story. Ever since the Christian Coalition was formed using the infrastructure of Pat Robertson's 1988 presidential run, the movement has focused on building power from the ground up, turning conservative churches into little political machines. "I would rather have a thousand school board members than one president and no school board members," Christian Coalition head Ralph Reed said in 1996. Palin, who got her start in a local church-backed political struggle, is very much the product of Reed's strategy.

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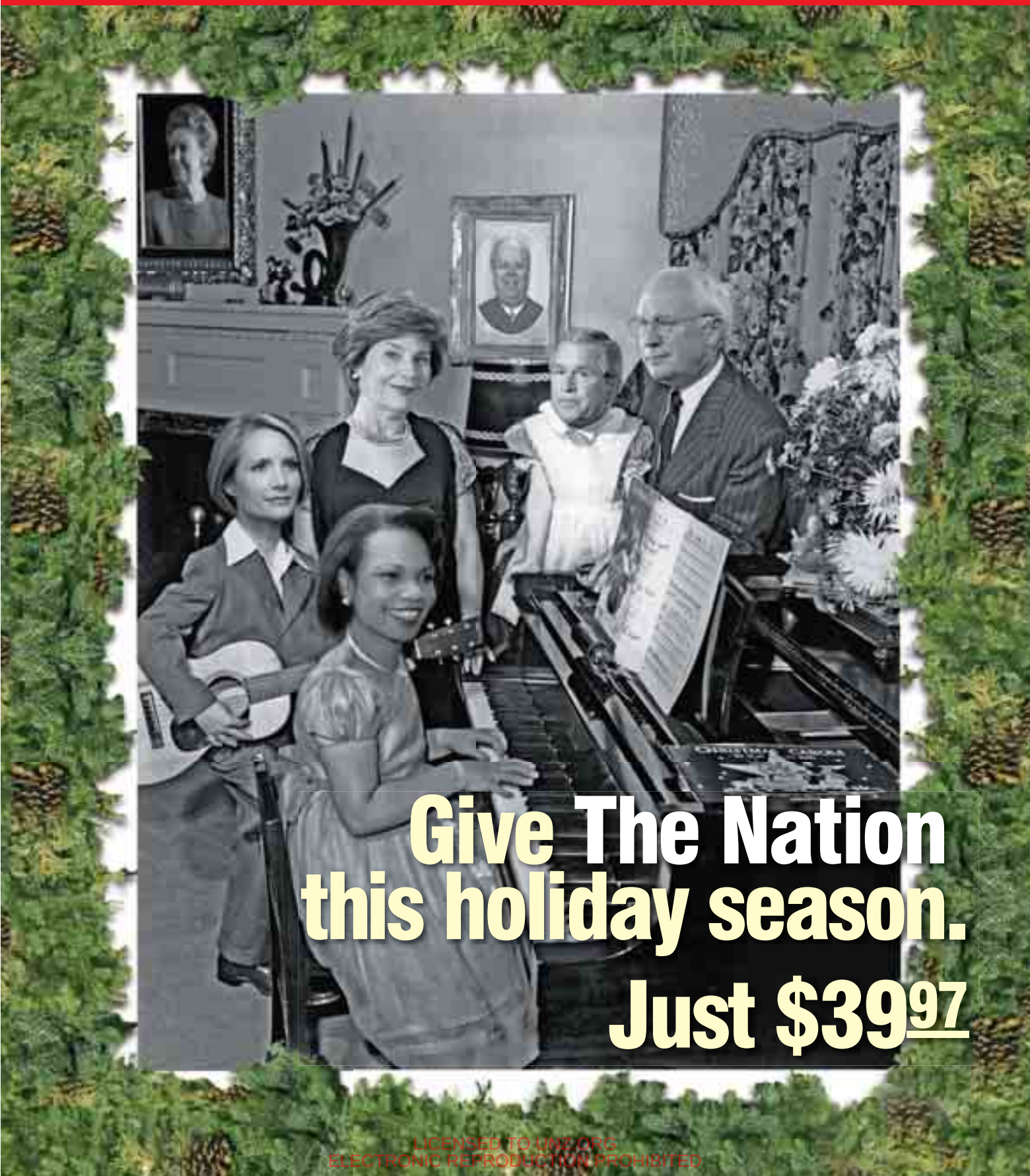
BACK BY POPULAR DEMAND!
(No, not them. The gift card!)



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She has not always governed as a zealot; in fact, she's a bit of a cipher, with scant record of speeches or writings on social issues or foreign policy. Nevertheless, several people who've dealt with her say that those concerned about church-state separation should be chilled by the idea of a Palin presidency. "To understand Sarah Palin, you have to realize that she is a religious fundamentalist," said Howard Bess, a retired liberal Baptist minister living in Palmer. "The structure of her understanding of life is no different from a Muslim fundamentalist."

Palin's nomination, and the energy she has injected into the GOP, show that, once again, reports of the death of the Christian right have been greatly exaggerated. Not long ago, pundits and journalists were lining up to explain how the religious right, long the largest and best-organized faction in the Republican Party, was deteriorating. Last year the liberal evangelical Jim Wallis published a piece in *Time* headlined The Religious Right's Era Is Over. Several months later *The New York Times Magazine* followed with a cover story titled The Evangelical Crackup. Liberal columnist E.J. Dionne argued, in his book *Souled Out: Reclaiming Faith and Politics After the Religious Right*, that the movement was collapsing.

Obviously the religious right has endured many setbacks in recent years. Ted Haggard, former head of the National Association of Evangelicals, slunk away in disgrace following a scandal involving a gay prostitute and crystal meth. Ralph Reed was tainted by his association with the extravagantly corrupt lobbyist Jack Abramoff. Jerry Falwell died, as did the influential Florida televangelist D. James Kennedy. Tom DeLay, one of the movement's fiercest allies, left Congress after being indicted on charges of criminal conspiracy. Nonetheless, the Republican Party is actually more dependent on religious conservatives than ever. In the 2006 midterms, the most significant GOP defeats were among moderate Republicans from the Northeast, where the party lost almost a third of its House seats, and from the Midwest, where it lost 15 percent. As moderates and independents abandoned the party, its center of gravity moved rightward. In order to maintain the support of the party that reluctantly nominated him, John McCain had to choose a vice president who represented the base. Indeed, never before has someone with such deep roots in the movement been on a major party ticket.

It's a familiar pattern: the Christian right often has its greatest triumphs just after it's been pronounced moribund. In 1999, just as the Christian right was about to achieve unprecedented power in the Bush administration, *The Economist* wrote, "The armies of righteousness, which once threatened to overwhelm the Republican Party, are downcast and despondent." One could have written the same thing last month. Now, as then, the movement has been resurrected. At the recent Values Voter Summit, a religious-right gathering in Washington, DC, sponsored by the Family Research Council, attendees were ebullient. "The surge of energy is unbelievable," said Emily Buchanan, executive director of the Susan B. Anthony List, a PAC that supports antiabortion candidates and aims to mobilize antiabortion women. "Sarah Palin is going to be our poster woman," she said. "She represents exactly what we've been trying to do since we were founded in 1992."

Palin—who opposes gay rights, believes abortion should be banned even in cases of rape and incest, and supports the teaching of creationism—wasn't known as a leader in Alaska's religious right, but she clearly had ties to it, and to some of the more extreme fundamentalists in the United States. As has been widely reported, her husband, Todd, was a member of the separatist Alaskan Independence Party. She reportedly attended the party's 1994 convention, and as governor she gave a video address to the group's gathering this year in Fairbanks. Less well-known are the Alaskan Independence Party's ties to the theocratic Constitution Party—a vice chair of the former is the state representative for the latter. According to its platform, the Constitution Party aims "to restore American jurisprudence to its Biblical foundations" and advocates criminalizing gay sex and abolishing Social Security.

The energy Palin's nomination has unleashed shows that, again, reports of the death of the Christian right have been greatly exaggerated.

When Palin ran for mayor in 1996, she leveraged the support of the religious conservatives. Wasilla mayoral races are nonpartisan and in the past had been focused on local issues like taxes and policing. In her challenge to Republican mayor John Stein, Palin changed that, touting her opposition to abortion, her religion and her support for gun rights. "She got a lot of help from the Christian groups," said Curt Menard, mayor of Mat-Su Borough (which includes Wasilla). "They came out and did telephone polling and things like that."

Menard and his wife, Republican State Senate candidate Linda Menard—the former director of the Miss Wasilla pageant—have known Palin since she was in third grade. She was a classmate and close friend of their late son, who, before he died in a 2001 plane crash, was the godfather of Palin's son Track. Their families attend the same church—Wasilla Bible Church, which Palin joined in 2002—and the Menards are caring for Palin's dog, Agia, named after Palin's proudest legislative accomplishment, the Alaska Gasoline Inducement Act, while she is on the campaign trail. They clearly adore Palin, and when Curt Menard describes her connections to the religious right, he doesn't intend to be critical.

Echoing Pat O'Hara's account, he recalled that the area had been solidly Democratic until the rise of politicized right-wing religion. "Pat Robertson, when he organized the Christian right…that's when this area really changed," said Menard. "To my knowledge, I would say [Palin] was supportive of the

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Michelle Goldberg is the author of Kingdom Coming: The Rise of Christian Nationalism. *Her new book,* The Means of Reproduction: Sex, Power and the Future of the World, *recently won the J. Anthony Lukas Work-In-Progress Award and will be published in April by Penguin.* *Research support for this article was provided by the Puffin Foundation Investigative Fund at The Nation Institute.*

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movement," he added, though he said she wasn't at the forefront of it.

Nevertheless, the movement was at the forefront of her mayoral campaign. According to Stein, a national antiabortion organization sent out postcards to Wasilla voters on Palin's behalf. There was a whisper campaign that Stein, a Lutheran, was actually Jewish. Some Palin supporters suggested that Stein and his wife, Karen Marie, weren't really married because they didn't have the same last name. "We had to produce a marriage certificate just to demonstrate that," said Stein. "I believe that was Sarah's campaign committee who brought that up."

Much has been made of Palin's gestures toward book-banning as mayor. To understand what happened, it's useful to realize that the Mat-Su Valley was in the middle of a roiling controversy over a book by Bess, the retired minister, titled *Pastor, I Am Gay*. Bess, 80, is deeply respected by the Valley's small progressive community. Educated at Northwestern's Garrett Biblical Institute—now called the Garrett Evangelical Theological Seminary—he comes from a Baptist tradition committed to church-state separation. In 1980 he left his church in Santa Barbara, California, to become pastor of Anchorage First American Baptist. Over the years Bess developed an intense concern about gay rights, and he went out of his way to welcome gay people into his Anchorage church. After he had served seven years at First Baptist, the board of the church asked him to lower his profile on the issue. Unwilling to do so, he resigned, took early retirement and ended up moving to Palmer to pastor a tiny liberal congregation, the Church of the Covenant, which he did without pay.

Bess published *Pastor, I Am Gay* in 1995. It recounts his experiences ministering to gay men and lesbians, calls for the church to take a stand against discrimination and even draws parallels between the experience of gay people and that of Jesus. "They are despised and rejected," he wrote. "They suffer and are acquainted with infirmity. They are rejected by a perversion of justice.… Is it possible that the will of the Lord will prosper through them?"

Local conservatives, including at Wasilla Assembly of God, mobilized against the book. Christian bookstores as well as secular retailers refused to sell it. Bess donated two copies to the Wasilla Public Library, but they vanished from the shelves, so he donated more. The atmosphere toward Bess was toxic; a 1997 cartoon in the *Frontiersman* showed a slobbering, doll-clutching pedophile approaching his church, whose sign said, Wasilla Church of the Covenant. Howard Bess, Pastor. All Sinners Welcome! Bible Interpretations to Suit Your "Lifestyle."

Most reports have said that, when asking about banning books, Palin never mentioned any specific titles, but the presence of *Pastor, I Am Gay* in the library was, at the time, a matter of fierce contention. "I'm as sure that that book was at issue with Sarah Palin as I am that I'm talking to you right now," said Bess.

When Palin ran for governor in 2006, Christian conservatives mobilized to help elect her—the Alaska Family Council, a group that formed that year and is loosely affiliated with Focus on the Family, distributed a voter guide showing Palin's alignment with its ideology. During her nineteen months as governor, it's important to note, she has mostly ignored divisive social issues, instead focusing on getting a gas pipeline built. If she hasn't governed as a fire-breather, though, her record nevertheless offers some evidence that in Washington she would likely continue George W. Bush's injection of religious dogmatism into government appointments and policy-making. Opposition to abortion is, for her, a litmus test. When Sarah Palin ran for mayor of Wasilla, Faye Palin, Todd's stepmother, supported her, but when Faye Palin ran for mayor in 2002, Sarah supported her opponent. The reason, said Menard, was that Faye Palin is prochoice. "To my knowledge, that was the big issue," he said.

Last year, when Vic Kohring, a Republican State Representative from Wasilla, left office after being indicted for bribery and extortion, Sarah Palin appointed Wes Keller, an elder in her church, to replace him. He introduced a bill to make the performance of intact dilation and extraction abortions—so-called "partial-birth abortions"—a felony, and according to a McClatchy Newspapers report, he plans to introduce legislation mandating the teaching of intelligent design in public schools.

Like McCain, Palin appears to believe that the United States is a Christian nation. As governor, she signed a resolution declaring October 21–27 Christian Heritage Week in Alaska, in order to remind Alaskans of "the role Christianity has played in our rich heritage." Written in the mode of some right-wing revisionist historians, it describes the nation's founders—including George Washington and Thomas Jefferson—as "Christians of caliber and integrity who did not hesitate to express their faith."

The conviction that America is a Christian nation could be especially worrisome when coupled with the kind of apocalyptic beliefs espoused by the Wasilla Assembly of God, since the combination suggests a profoundly messianic foreign policy. In a widely seen video taken just months before she received the vice presidential nomination, Palin stood onstage in her old church with pastor Ed Kalnins as he explained how, in the last days, Alaska would be a refuge for Christians fleeing the Lower 48. "Hundreds of thousands of people are going to come to this state to seek refuge, and the church has to be ready to minister to them." Palin's current religious home, Wasilla Bible Church, is rather more moderate and low-key, but it, too, subscribes to a theology that includes a literal belief in a biblical End Times scenario. In August, it hosted David Brickner, executive director of Jews for Jesus, who told the congregation, "But what we see in Israel, the conflict that is spilled out throughout the Middle East, really which is all about Jerusalem, is an ongoing reflection of the fact that there is judgment…there's a reality to the judgment of unbelief."

Brickner's beliefs, said Menard, are shared by many at Wasilla Bible Church, though he said he couldn't speak to the particulars of Palin's faith. Whatever her original convictions about the Middle East—or anything else—they have likely stayed intact throughout her tutorials by the McCain campaign team. "Once she makes her mind up on an issue, it takes a ninety-mile-an-hour Alaska north wind to move her off course," said Menard. Of course, he meant it as a compliment, not a warning. ■

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McCain's Troopergate Scandal

His GOP operatives are trying to derail the investigation into Sarah Palin's abuse of power.

by JOHN NICHOLS

Anchorage

On day one of the Republican National Convention, NBC News correspondent Andrea Mitchell breathlessly reported from the floor of the session that "there are Republican lawyers right now up in Alaska doing a deeper vet on Sarah Palin." Mitchell was both right and wrong. A "jump team" of top lawyers and communications operatives had indeed decamped to Anchorage. But the dozen McCain campaign fixers—led by a veteran of the *Bush v. Gore* Florida recount fight of 2000—did not head north to perform a post-selection vetting of vice presidential pick Palin. The hired guns were on the Last Frontier to manage a mess: the prospect that the state-sanctioned investigation of an abuse-of-power scandal involving Palin would destroy the governor's credibility as a reformer—and with it the argument that their new No. 2's relative inexperience was mitigated by her able leadership.

Palin had other issues—a record of demanding earmarks while claiming to reject them, extreme religious views, an underutilized passport and a Cheneyesque penchant for official secrecy and executive excess that put the lie to her presumed commitment to openness. But it was the Troopergate scandal that really had the McCain camp spooked. With its intimations that the governor dismissed Alaska's top cop because he refused to fire Palin's former brother-in-law—a state trooper with whom she and her husband were feuding—the controversy threatened Palin's carefully manufactured image. Weeks before she joined the ticket, her ethics counselor, Wevley Shea, a former US Attorney for Alaska, had warned her with regard to Troopergate that "the situation is now grave." Despite statements to the contrary, the decision by top McCain campaign adviser Steve Schmidt to send a strike force, and the relentless focus on Troopergate by its members, like former Justice Department prosecutor Ed O'Callaghan, leaves no doubt that the McCain camp shared Shea's assessment.

"The fight is over how [Palin] is going to be defined in the eyes of the American public," admitted former McCain campaign manager Terry Nelson. "All the information about her has not been introduced, and once that information comes to light people are going to draw conclusions about her, and the campaigns are fighting to shape the conclusions."

The most politically volatile conclusion—an election-season determination that Palin had abused her authority in a manner that could lead to official sanctions, perhaps even impeachment—was not something the McCain camp was willing to leave to chance. Top aides parachuted into Anchorage on a two-tier mission. On the ground in Alaska, they initiated a series of stalling schemes designed to prevent a damaging report from being released before the November 4 election. At the same time, McCain acolytes, led by former New York mayor and presidential hopeful Rudy Giuliani, appeared on national television to spin the story that the bipartisan inquiry was a partisan witch hunt. In so doing, McCain's aides provided vivid illustration of precisely what can happen when a determined presidential campaign is willing to do anything to maintain the carefully crafted image of a running mate who has become essential to its electoral prospects.

AL GRILLO/ASSOCIATED PRESS

Former Alaska Public Safety Commissioner Walt Monegan

"The McCain campaign decided it could come into a small state and stop a legitimate investigation," explained Democratic State Representative Les Gara, a former Alaska assistant attorney general. "They knew they had a problem with Troopergate, but they decided they could roll over everyone in Alaska. They've unleashed what for Alaska is an unprecedented amount of spin. They've attacked a bipartisan investigation and a nonpartisan investigator as somehow partisan. It's all about muddying things up rather than providing the transparency that Sarah Palin says she's all about." Alaska House Judiciary Committee chair Jay Ramras, a Republican, was blunter. "I remain a McCain supporter, but certainly not on this issue," said Ramras, who charged that McCain's operatives were attempting to "rewrite history" by seeking to derail the Palin investigation.

The rewrite proceeded rapidly. By the time the GOP national convention opened—three days after Palin's selection—the McCain team, led by veteran Bush/Cheney aide Taylor Griffin and reporting directly to campaign adviser Schmidt, had established a command center in Anchorage and conducted conference calls with Alaska GOP legislators, conservative leaders and associates of Palin to instruct them on how to say "supportive things," according to an Alaska Republican who was in

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on the calls but spoke to media on condition of anonymity. "All I keep hearing is, 'Why don't you toe the line?'" said Rick Rydell, a conservative Anchorage radio host. Many Republicans did just that; former Alaska House Speaker Gail Phillips, who initially complained to reporters about McCain's failure to vet Palin, suddenly stopped giving interviews. Calls to Palin's office by national reporters started being routed to McCain campaign operatives. And Anchorage news cycles came to be dominated by denunciations of the probe from top GOP officials, announcements that Palin aides would not cooperate with the investigation, the filing of lawsuits and press conferences where O'Callaghan—who six weeks before had been working in the US Attorney's office in New York—commented, with seeming authority, about how the Troopergate inquiry was "tainted."

While national news reports lumped Palin's personal and political conflicts into a muddy file of Alaskiana, serious political observers in the state understood that the primary concern of McCain aides was Troopergate, a controversy that exploded with Palin's July dismissal of Public Safety Commissioner Walt Monegan, allegedly after he refused to fire Palin's former brother-in-law, a state trooper who had been involved in an ugly divorce fight with the governor's sister. Arthur Culvahouse Jr., the lawyer who conducted the pre-selection review of Palin for McCain, admits he "spent a lot of time with her lawyer" discussing the scandal. But it soon became evident that the McCain camp was uninterested in hearing that Palin had problems that might disqualify her. "They had to handle Troopergate. So they hijacked the investigation," complained Camille Conte, a popular progressive radio host in Anchorage.

Essential to the McCain team's initiative was a claim that the investigation, which had begun a month before Palin was tapped for vice president, was a partisan project cooked up by Barack Obama's campaign. This spin was primarily for national consumption; Alaskans knew Monegan as the respected former Anchorage police chief and were aware that the probe of his firing had been unanimously authorized by the state's Republican-controlled Legislative Council.

McCain's operatives did not let facts get in their way. Within hours of his arrival in Alaska, Taylor Griffin—who was the GOP "media coordinator" during the 2000 *Bush v. Gore* fight before joining the White House Office of Media Affairs—was peddling the line that the investigation "has become a political circus and has gotten out of control." Palin, who initially greeted the inquiry with a call for the legislature to "hold me accountable," underwent an extreme political makeover. Suddenly the governor and her "first dude" husband, Todd—who reportedly had joined the governor in pressuring Monegan—had private counsel. And their lawyer said the governor wouldn't cooperate until the legislature shut down its inquiry and turned over responsibility to the state Personnel Board, whose members are appointed by the governor (unlike the Legislative Council, due to finish its inquiry before election day, the Personnel Board was unlikely to get anything done until after the November voting).

On the first day of the GOP convention, when party leaders were supposedly fretting about Hurricane Gustav, Palin found time to file the equivalent of an ethics complaint against herself, prompting the Personnel Board probe. The notoriously secretive governor dispensed with the "open and transparent" ruse she had employed to challenge Alaska's good-old-boy

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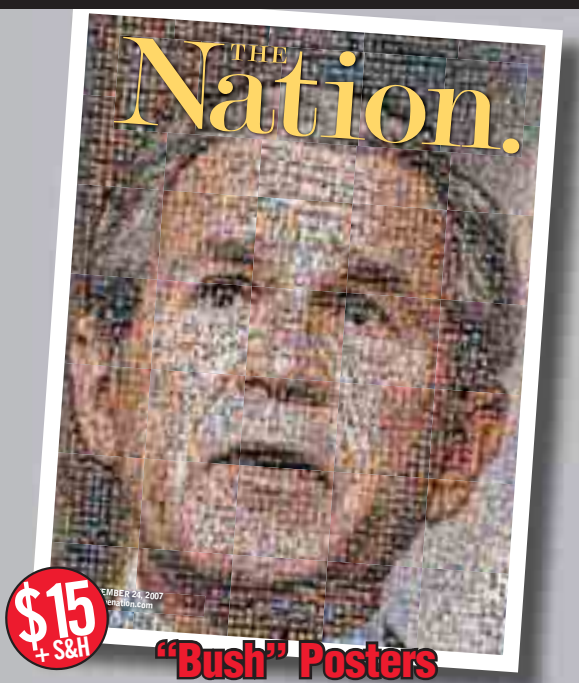

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politics in her 2006 statewide campaign—and that the McCain campaign was celebrating in its ads. What re-emerged was the calculating politician with a history of avoiding accountability that recalled her controversial days as mayor of Wasilla. She was accused of removing Wasilla employees who questioned her authority and using city offices and equipment for political purposes. Palin—who, it was revealed in September, uses two BlackBerrys in order to keep certain communications out of the official record—may be running as an outsider. But Alaska's Conte sees the governor as a smooth fit with the vice president she seeks to replace. "She had to make a choice between sticking with what she said she would do—cooperating with the inquiry—and doing what the McCain people told her to do," said Conte. "They came in with their Karl Rove/Dick Cheney tactics and she said, Count me in."

McCain's camp caught a break when some liberal bloggers and the national media got excited about Palin's family matters—especially the pregnancy of her 17-year-old daughter—rather than the political record that would have been the first focus for a male nominee and that would have turned national attention to Troopergate. This gave Palin insulation—she and McCain aides could complain about "cheap shots" from "the liberal media"—and precious time to reframe the investigation as Democratic victimization.

'It's a shame for anybody who buys this bag of oats that the McCain camp is peddling.'
—Jay Ramras, GOP Alaska House member

Palin had always denied wrongdoing in the July firing of Monegan. The governor, who as Wasilla's mayor had fired a police chief who tried to crack down on local taverns that encouraged late-night drinking, claimed she dismissed Monegan for failing to address alcohol abuse in rural Alaska. Palin's story evolved until her lawyer accused Monegan of "outright insubordination." Monegan insisted that "she's not telling the truth to the media about her reasons for firing me." From the start, a number of prominent Republicans and Alaska conservatives expressed their faith in Monegan. Former GOP legislator Andrew Halcro, who pushed for the inquiry, argued, "Walt Monegan got fired for all of the wrong reasons. Walt Monegan got fired because he had the audacity to tell Governor Palin no, when apparently nobody is allowed to say no to Governor Palin…. Monegan said no to firing a state trooper who had divorced Governor Palin's sister because the guy was being maliciously hounded by Palin's family."

Legislators shared the suspicion. The Legislative Council's eight Republicans and four Democrats decided unanimously to hire a retired prosecutor, Steve Branchflower, to run the inquiry. Declaring its intent "that the investigation be professional, unbiased, independent, objective and conducted at arm's length from the political process," the council selected State Senate Judiciary Committee chair Hollis French II, an Anchorage Democrat who had been elected to the legislature after a career as a criminal prosecutor, to manage the probe. Palin, who welcomed the inquiry, had reason to feel lucky: far from being a bitter partisan, French had recently crossed party lines to work closely with her to establish more responsible tax policies regarding the state's oil companies.

As late as mid August, French—whose Anchorage office is lined with history and law books and who retains the cool, measured style of a prosecutor—was assuring reporters that the Palin administration was cooperating with the inquiry. It was unlikely that subpoenas would need to be issued, said French, who predicted Palin would volunteer to be deposed.

Like legislators of both parties, French said he was shocked that the McCain campaign made no effort to contact senators involved in the probe during what McCain claimed was a "completely thorough" vetting of Palin. "If they had done their job, they never would have picked her. Now they may have to deal with an October surprise," French told reporters, noting that the Troopergate report had been set for a late October release (the timetable was later sped up, with an eye toward dialing down partisan rancor, and is set for October 10).

McCain operatives leapt on the "October surprise" line to smear French as an Obama operative out to discredit the governor. GOP State Representative John Coghill—who says he called McCain's campaign after Palin's selection to say, "Hey, I'm your boy now"—demanded, after consulting with McCain lieutenants, that French quit as manager of the investigation, charging that he was "steering the direction of the investigation, its conclusion and its timing in a manner that will have maximum partisan political impact on the national and state elections."

Coghill was wrong, and he knew it: the date for the release of the report had been set long before Palin joined McCain's ticket, and it was French who had said early on that in order to avoid partisanship, "We need to hand this off to someone." That someone, veteran prosecutor Branchflower, is conducting the investigation and preparing the report.

The state's largest paper, the *Anchorage Daily News*—which has a mixed record of praising and pillorying Palin—dismissed Coghill's attack as "a partisan overreaction." Legislators in both parties agreed, and after Palin aides started refusing to assist the probe, the Senate Judiciary Committee decided in a bipartisan vote taken September 12 to issue subpoenas to thirteen people—including Todd Palin—to compel their cooperation. The state attorney general, a Palin appointee, objected, as did Todd Palin's lawyer, and prospects that the probe would follow its original timeline dimmed. Meanwhile, the McCain camp was busy discrediting a legitimate investigation with big lies that reverberated in the national media echo chamber, as the facts were dismissed or forgotten. It wasn't just Rush Limbaugh or Sean Hannity or even the right-wing blogs that attacked Hollis French as "a made man in the Obama mafia" and an "Obamabot." Ed O'Callaghan was on CNN from Alaska, telling anchor Rick Sanchez that French and other Democratic legislators were doing Obama's bidding, failing to note that key Alaska Republicans, like Senate President Lyda Green, continued to support the investigation. Rudy Giuliani appeared on *Meet the Press* saying, "That whole investigation in, in Alaska…that's being run by Obama supporters."

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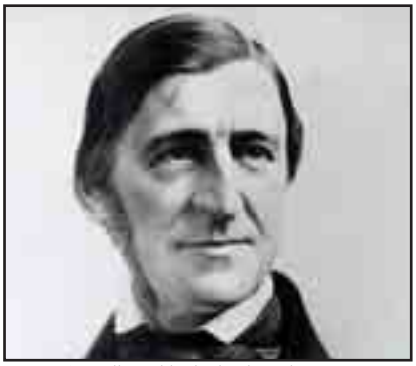

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By mid September national media were reporting Palin's refusal to cooperate. The Obama campaign, meanwhile, was doing everything it could to keep the discussion on McCain and the economy, offering little if any push back. In Alaska, however, even conservatives were griping. "I want McCain and Palin to win too," argued Dan Fagan, a popular right-wing Anchorage radio host. "But with Palin's refusal to cooperate with the independent investigator and her transparent delay tactics, Americans deserve to know what Palin is trying to hide before we vote her a heartbeat away from the leader of the free world."

Jay Ramras, the GOP Judiciary Committee chair, was frustrated. "It's a shame for anybody who buys this bag of oats that the McCain camp is peddling," Ramras said. His Democratic colleague Les Gara said, "Usually, the spin wins. We caught them on it here. But they're still spinning. It doesn't seem to matter, even when they're confronted with the truth."

Gara's right. So the question is no longer merely, How did Sarah Palin abuse her authority? Or even, What did she know and when did she know it? The fundamental political question of the moment is whether the McCain camp will succeed in spinning Palin's nasty home-state scandal into something just convoluted enough to get the fickle national media to give the Alaska governor a soft pass. If that happens, it will be because a crack campaign team, made up of veteran Bush/Cheney operatives and reporting directly to McCain campaign adviser Schmidt, stirred up sufficient confusion and partisan rancor to obscure what's really happening in a small state that has never before been a prime battleground in a presidential race.

If spin wins, it will not just be the truth that takes a hit. As Troopergate and its fallout reveal, Sarah Palin is more than a hockey mom. She is a fiercely ambitious politician with a penchant for secrecy and a history of using positions of public trust to advance her personal and ideological agendas. It is no coincidence that the current vice president has lavished praise on Palin—saying he "loved" her "superb" convention speech. Dick Cheney is often portrayed as the ultimate insider, just as Palin is packaged as the ultimate outsider. But Cheney recognizes in Palin someone who meets his warped standard for "an effective vice president." That's the inconvenient truth the McCain campaign is working overtime to hide until after November 4. ■

Wooing the White Working Class

To dispel white workers' doubts about Obama, unions are urging them to look beyond race.

by DAVID MOBERG

On a rainy afternoon in early September, Jeff Ampey, a member of the Communications Workers union, knocked on the door of Frances Brady's home in Galesburg, part of the historically conservative "Dutch Triangle" in southwest Michigan. He was walking through the neighborhood as part of an AFL-CIO effort to contact union members about the presidential election.

Brady, an 81-year-old former paper worker who retired before most of the area's many paper mills closed, said she was "not 100 percent sure" about whom she would support. Ampey politely left some brochures—one rebutting common false rumors about Barack Obama (such as that he's a Muslim), the other about Obama "building an economy that works for all."

When I called back the next day, Brady had made up her mind. "I'm a Democrat in my heart," she said. "Last time I voted for Bush, and I said I'd never vote for them again. I've got a grandson who was in Afghanistan three years, and they could call him back. On the economy, I think Bush looks the other way. Obama, I'm a little bit unsure sometimes because he doesn't have experience, but he's for the average American person and the poor, and I think he's a very smart man."

There are a lot of wavering voters, especially older whites like Brady, who lean Democratic but aren't sure about Obama. In the final weeks of the campaign, the labor movement could play a critical role in winning them over and tipping the race. Despite their dwindling ranks, voters from union households make up about a quarter of the electorate (in this battleground state, that figure is around 37 percent). Organized labor can also reach out to the 2.5 million members of Working America, the AFL-CIO's new community affiliate, as well as to millions of retirees like Brady (many of whom will learn from the union-affiliated Alliance for Retired Americans

ROB SUSSMAN

David Moberg, who writes frequently on labor for The Nation, *is a senior editor at* In These Times.

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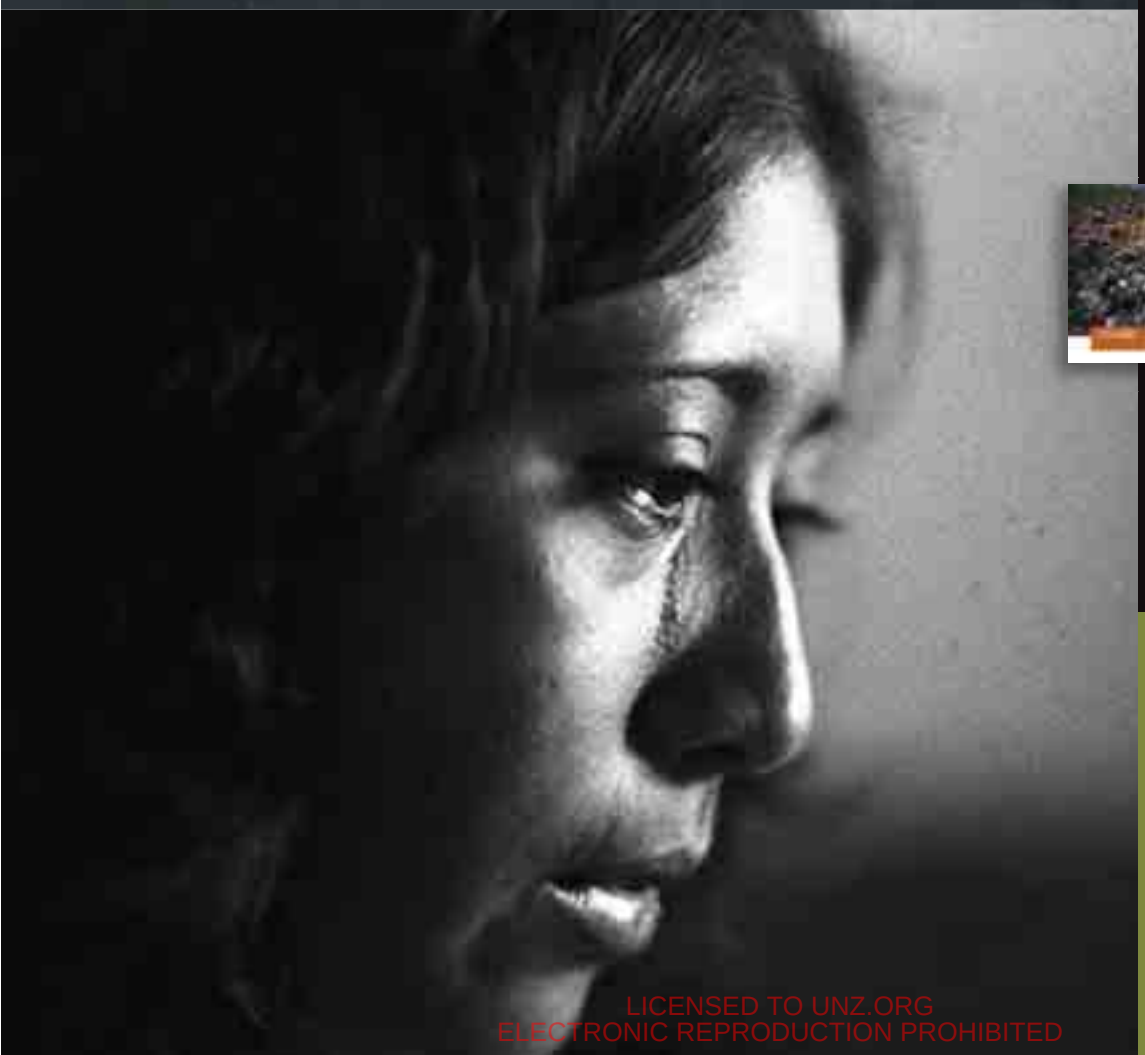

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that McCain wants to privatize Social Security).

Union membership—and labor's education and mobilization efforts—make a big difference in how people vote. In the 2006 House elections, for example, white men voted Republican by nine points, according to Hart Research, but white men who were union members favored Democrats by thirty-nine points.

But this election, with the nation's first African-American presidential candidate, is different. Since Obama polls lower than a generic Democrat and lost the white working-class vote to Hillary Clinton in key primaries, many analysts wonder whether Obama has a white working-class problem that could jeopardize his bid for the presidency. The answer is up in the air—and much depends on the labor movement's political operation this fall.

It's worth remembering that no Democratic presidential candidate has won a majority of white votes since 1964. And today, with the growing Latino and Asian populations, Obama needs only to do well—but not necessarily win—among white workers. Late summer polls showed that Obama was scoring better among all whites than Kerry or Gore did, winning more support from lower-income than high-income voters, leading McCain 47 percent to 37 percent among low-wage white workers (in an August *Washington Post* poll). According to an August Lake Research poll for the Change to Win labor federation, white nonsupervisory workers younger than 65 were split evenly between Obama and McCain, with 13 percent undecided. So there are signs that Obama is doing relatively well among white working-class voters after all.

Union leaders are engaged in a frank debate about how to deal with the issue of race as they drum up support for Obama.

But there are problems—and opportunities. Voter identification and the views of independents have shifted toward the Democrats in recent years. That trend suggests that Obama should be doing better, but he still lags among self-identified Democrats. Much of the resistance comes from older whites. But it also comes from specific regions like Appalachia, as AFSCME (public employee) union president Gerald McEntee argues, or Macomb County, the largely white Catholic Detroit suburb whose residents epitomized working-class Reagan Democrats. Pollster Stanley Greenberg returned in July and found Obama trailing McCain by seven points, doing worse than either Gore or Kerry had done. Macomb County's white union members favored Obama—but only by a 47 percent to 34 percent margin.

Polls of union members over the summer typically showed that they supported McCain less or about the same as Bush in 2004, but compared with four years ago, there was a larger fraction of undecided union voters. "Among folks who feel they know something about him, he's winning by more than two to one among union members," says AFL-CIO deputy political director Michael Podhorzer. "Among those who don't know much, he's only ahead by a few points. In our minds it's coming down to a persuasion election" to reach undecided voters, most of whom dislike Bush.

Like many undecideds, Macomb voters were "less comfortable" with the idea of Obama as president than with a generic Democrat or McCain. It's easy to translate discomfort as prejudice, but Greenberg argues that race is a diminishing factor for Macomb voters.

In decades past, surveys on racial attitudes—whatever their flaws—showed that better-educated Americans believed fewer racial stereotypes and expressed more sympathy for policies to redress past discrimination than people with less education. Now the groups have converged, according to University of Illinois sociologist Maria Krysan, with both groups rejecting stereotypes but also rejecting redress. To the extent that racism is still a problem, it's most likely more evenly distributed by class, perhaps more concentrated among middle-income workers. But race clearly remains a problem for Obama. At least 6 percent of likely voters in a late August *Washington Post* poll expressed strong discomfort with a black president. Conservative politicians also win support when they promote some positions that are not explicitly racial—like acting tough on crime or disparaging aid to cities—because they trigger lingering subconscious racial resentment.

The new climate on race means that white voters want to be sure Obama is a champion for everyone, not just blacks, Greenberg observes; Macomb voters largely, but not fully, see him that way. Recent research (such as Harvard postdoctoral fellow Daniel Hopkins's study of 133 elections from 1986 to 2006) suggests that the infamous Bradley effect—voters telling pollsters they are undecided or support a black candidate but voting for a white in the polling booth—is probably diminishing. For example, although ads with a clear racial subtext hurt Harold Ford in his 2006 bid for the Senate in Tennessee, his final vote slightly exceeded the last pre-election polls. The Republicans can exploit subterranean racial fears by portraying Obama as "the other," but if their appeals are too overt, they could backfire, especially among women.

Union leaders are engaged in a frank debate about how to deal with the issue of race as they drum up support for Obama. "Obviously in the United States, whether union members or not, at a conscious or unconscious level, race is a significant factor in this election," Podhorzer says. "But I don't think it's bigger, or smaller, for union members than the general public."

Unions favor broad, class-based economic appeals, but many leaders have decided union members must confront racism directly. Steelworkers gave AFL-CIO secretary-treasurer Richard Trumka a standing ovation at their convention when he told them, "There's not a single good reason for any worker, especially any union member, to vote against Barack Obama. There's only a bad reason: because he's not white."

But labor's strategy for confronting the race issue reflects the complexity of people's hesitations, which are not just racial, McEntee argues. For example, even though strong majorities agree with Obama that the Iraq War was a mistake and that we

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should withdraw troops as fast as possible, McCain has played the POW card to make himself the symbol of national security. And some voters identify with Sarah Palin and her union-member "first dude" as being more like them (even if they are more likely to think Obama cares about people like them). Unions want to recast the debate, transforming McCain into Bush III and focusing on his continuation of despised and, as is increasingly obvious, ruinous economic policies. Months before the AFL-CIO endorsed Obama in June, it began a campaign to debunk McCain's maverick claim, linking him to Bush. At the same time, it attacked McCain's record, especially his proposal to tax workers' healthcare benefits as income. The AFL-CIO also established a Veterans Council to argue that whatever McCain did in Vietnam, he was no hero for working families—nor a supporter of adequate benefits for veterans.

Most important, "we're talking about issues of economic self-interest," says AFL-CIO political director Karen Ackerman—jobs, the right to organize unions, inequality, pensions, trade, healthcare. Union strategists want the Obama campaign to focus more on pocketbook issues. "Part of what he has to do is pound the economic message," says one union official. "He has to say very specifically what kind of change he means, practical proposals that fundamentally change people's lives and give their kids a better future." The polling by Greenberg and Lake Research indicates that the Obama campaign can move many undecided white workers into his column with a strong populist economic message. But Laborers president Terry O'Sullivan says, "They're doing what they need to do. I put the challenge on us to make sure our members understand what he stands for."

"A lot of our members will have a hard time with the choice," says Painters union president James Williams. "But when you put the issue of their paycheck and pension on the table, I think they'll make the right decision." As Greg Junemann, president of the Professional and Technical Engineers, says, "On every policy resolution in the last two conventions, Obama is with us, McCain against us. How could we say, 'Yeah, but he's black'? Obama walks the picket line. McCain doesn't believe we should have picket lines."

And at the same time, unions try to knock down the persistent rumors and to make union members see Obama as someone like them, who had to work hard for what he's got. "There is some unease with Obama, as not a familiar entity," Ackerman says. "We take that seriously and have created a program to give those voters a degree of comfort voting for Obama."

The labor movement is making a massive effort, spending altogether almost $300 million for this political cycle, compared with around $200 million four years ago, according to McEntee. But it's been frustrated by delays and divisions. The June AFL-CIO endorsement of Obama, coming after a long primary during which many union leaders favored Clinton or John Edwards, slowed the AFL-CIO effort to educate members about Obama.

Change to Win (CTW) unions, with a combined political budget of $125 million, endorsed Obama in February and began developing a more independent operation than in 2006, when the breakaway group relied more heavily on the AFL-CIO political program (as the Laborers, part of CTW, still do). The two federations have tensions in their relationship that sometimes make collaboration difficult. Differences over strategy, moreover, have cropped up within the AFL-CIO. In March, the Steelworkers, Auto Workers, Communications Workers and Professional and Technical Engineers formed the Alliance, a more workplace-focused campaign, to complement the AFL-CIO operation. "Just trying to go deeper," as CWA president Larry Cohen explained, they also wanted to put more emphasis on trade, the Employee Free Choice Act (which would permit workers to unionize when a majority in a workplace sign up), healthcare and pensions. And they wanted to focus on Senate races, such as in Mississippi, where they might boost the Democratic majority to assure passage of EFCA. Steelworkers president Leo Gerard, whose union has trained an army of 10,000 activists who mobilize members at work, says, "This is not about division. We believe it's a simple issue: a lot of our unions spend time together on the ground, and we concluded we could be more effective this way than simply doing Labor '08 [the AFL-CIO program]. We're going to do Labor '08 plus more."

Unions favor broad, class-based economic appeals, but many leaders have decided union members must confront racism directly.

Beyond the work on elections, unions are simultaneously attempting to build union member and public support for issues they hope an Obama administration will embrace, especially universal health insurance (though the proposals and strategies vary), the EFCA (unions plan to deliver 1 million signatures in support when Congress meets in January) and infrastructure investment. Then unions plan to shift their election mobilization into a movement to hold Congress and Obama accountable, assuming he is elected. For example, Anna Burger says that the Service Employees, after committing $5 million to the election, have budgeted $10 million for their accountability campaign.

In the final weeks, tens of thousands of union volunteers will leaflet their workplaces, phone union members and go door to door. The more personal the message, the more it's repeated in different ways, the more it's tailored to specific workers' interests, the more persuasive it will be. And if AFL-CIO organizing director Stewart Acuff has his way, members will carry labor's political message to nonunion neighbors as well. Within the limits of campaign finance laws, he argues, "We've got to see union members as important messengers in their communities."

To a significant degree, Obama's success will hinge on how well unions convert their wavering members. And much of their success will depend on workers like Connie Couch, a 49-year-old nurse, single mother and new union member who came out in the rain in Galesburg to knock on doors. "I want change. We really need change," she explained. "I back Barack." ■

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Comment

(continued from page 8)

Water the Roots

by THE REV. JESSE JACKSON

With billions of taxpayer dollars being used to bail out banks and big corporations, the public must focus on the question, What do the people get from the investment of our tax money into these bailouts? They must be included in the benefits. Two-thirds of US economic activity is driven by consumers. When working Americans suffer, everyone suffers.

How did we get here? Borrowers were steered into predatory mortgage loans with grossly escalating interest rates that they could not afford. They still can't. The pain of homeowners has now spread throughout the economy.

We must challenge plans that bail out the rich, put out the poor and put down the middle class. We can't just bail out Wall Street and ignore Main Street. The bailout must be bottom up, not just top down. The poor—the unemployed poor, the working poor and the fixed-income poor—must benefit from the investment of their tax dollars. Any "solution" or remedy must be judged by how it affects "the least of these."

The oversight committees and the overseers must come off the payroll of Wall Street. They cannot eat from the same trough and retain any credibility as regulators. If the owners pay the referees and umpires, the integrity of the game will be corrupted, leaving all outcomes suspect.

We must freeze multimillion-dollar golden parachute retirement payouts to fired executives who "led" their companies down a failed road. There must be a cap on executive pay and compensation.

We must freeze foreclosures and restructure and modify the loans; we must protect the home equity of people defrauded and victimized by the subprime lending schemes.

Urban policy must be included in the bailout: we must reinvest in America and put Americans back to work. If billions of taxpayer dollars can go to bail out the banks, funds must also go to build new infrastructure, schools and roads as well as to incentives to stop plant closures. Investment must be made to provide healthcare for all Americans. In this way, we not only do the right thing; we do the smart thing to create lasting economic growth.

In these economic times, we must invest in job creation—green jobs and public works jobs. We must water and feed the roots. Confidence cannot be restored from the top. When big banks lend to businesses while consumers remain doubtful and afraid to spend, businesses can't sell and businesses can't repay.

The Rev. Jesse Jackson is founder and president of the Rainbow/PUSH Coalition.

Exchange

(continued from page 2)

and their survivors will give up or die. This is what happens. The VA abandons our finest in their hour of need.

Shelia Winsett

Archdale, N.C.

This article was right on the money about the VA delaying and denying veterans their benefits, even when it is obvious they deserve them. I have fourteen—no typo, fourteen—VA doctors who concur that I have service-connected PTSD from my time in Southeast Asia. But since I was not a decorated combat soldier, they say I have to prove my stressor. I even had flashbacks under anesthesia while the VA doctors were giving me treatment.

My claim is six years old. The kicker is that the Winston-Salem VA regional office requested, and lost, my entire package of service and medical records. If I hadn't had my discharge papers, they would have said I'd never been in the service.

I had a good job but started having problems. Now the VA doctors won't allow me to work, but the VA won't compensate me. I spend my time assisting veterans in filling out those "simple" twenty-six-page claim forms, and the VA always either loses them or waits six months and asks more questions. One vet I helped had a Purple Heart and a Silver Star and had received a battlefield promotion. He was denied benefits.

James "Butch" Kirkman

Kors Replies

New York City

I was touched by the letters I received in response to my article on Sergeant Jimenez and the wounded veterans who are suing the VA. Laura Jimenez Burroughs has my respect, as do the thousands of women like Paula French, whose husband is battling the VA with one hand and Alzheimer's with the other.

I appreciate VA spokeswoman Kerri Childress's letter as well. Had she specified which aspect of my article she found "distorted" and which passages were "simply wrong," I could address her concerns. As a reporter, I'm committed to neutrality and accuracy. That's why I made sure to include a range of VA voices: spokeswoman Childress, VA appeals board chair James Terry, mental health chief Ira Katz, deputy under secretary Michael Walcoff, former deputy under secretary Frances Murphy and Sergeant Jimenez's VA doctor and VA rater.

Many readers asked for more information on the legal limitations placed on veterans. As I discussed in the article, wounded veterans cannot pay a lawyer to file their disability application. But if one volunteers to work for free, veterans can use a lawyer's services. Currently, says William Fox, an expert in veterans' law, fewer than 1 percent of veterans who are filing disability claims receive a lawyer's assistance.

But the legal landscape is changing. Last year the president signed the Veterans' Choice of Representation Act, which allows veterans to pay a lawyer during the later appeals stages of the benefits process.

In the next few days, Capitol Hill may deliver another dramatic change: the Disability Benefits Claims Modernization Act. Written by Representative Jon Hall, the act would eliminate the "proof" process for obviously wounded soldiers like Sergeant Jimenez, paving the way for immediate benefits. Hall's bill passed the House in July without opposition. Senators Hillary Clinton and Chuck Schumer are working to push the bill through the Senate in the remaining days of the 110th Congress.

Joshua Kors

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Books & the Arts.

Homing Patterns

by WILLIAM DERESIEWICZ

ADRIAN BELLESGUARD

Marilynne Robinson

Home
By Marilynne Robinson.
Farrar, Straus & Giroux. 325 pp. $25.

Four years ago, Marilynne Robinson broke one of the longest creative silences in American fiction. Twenty-four years had elapsed since the publication of her ferocious first novel, the bone-hard, lake-cold, moon-lonely *Housekeeping*. People wondered if there would be a second. But Robinson is not one to let herself be rushed. Besides, new ideas were finding room in her imagination. When the second novel finally came—it was *Gilead*, as sweet-tempered a book as one can imagine—it was all but unrecognizable as the work of the same author. Now comes a third that manages to bridge the gulf between its predecessors. *Home* is set in the same Iowa town that gives *Gilead* its name, and amid the same circle of Protestant ministers' families, but it tests that world of piety and stability by forcing it to come to terms with a sense of existential orphanhood as absolute as any that haunts *Housekeeping*.

Robinson's first work, to my mind, is still her greatest. The novel unfolds as a single thought, impelled by a poetic intensity of language and vision. "Their lives spun off the tilting world like thread off a spindle, breakfast time, suppertime, lilac time, apple time"; "Where the snow receded, they might see the ruins of a porcupine, teeth here, tail there." The syntax is as pitiless as the sentiments. Each sentence seems scoured to rock by a thousand years of wind and rain, and the whole appears to emanate from a mind as large and impartial as nature itself. Robinson, who grew up amid the novel's bleak north Idaho landscape and an equally austere Presbyterianism, has come to be known as a Christian writer. *Gilead* is the testament of a dying Congregational minister. *The Death of Adam*, which preceded it by six years, is a collection of polemics in depreciation of modern thought and defense of Calvinism. But Robinson has acknowledged that the spiritual intuitions of her childhood, her awareness "to the point of alarm of a vast energy of intention, all around me," had as yet no doctrinal form, that her "archaic self might have been nothing other than a latter-day pagan." Whatever her personal practices by the time she wrote *Housekeeping*—Robinson turned 37 the year it came out—the novel still bespeaks the spirit of that tormented, pupal soul. The novel's intimations of loneliness and loss, its sense of the undertow of transience that draws the living ineluctably down toward the dead, are too unconsoled to be denominated Christian.

The metaphysics at work in *Housekeeping* does indeed resemble a form of paganism—a gloomy, Northern paganism. Divinity is immanent in nature but perfectly indifferent to human fate. Life is but a shadow on the surface of the past, and when we die we don't go up to a jubilant heaven but down to the dark to join "the dance of bones." The social world, all gibbering aunts and meddlesome neighbors, is a kind of joke, a delusion of safety and permanence. Religion is no exception: "When the bells rang the lady would come out with a shawl over her head and she would pray, and the parrot would pray with her, the woman's voice and the parrot's voice, on and on." The novel's title is heavily ironic; there is no keeping of houses, or anything else. By the end, both the story and its narrator have slipped into a realm of allegory where the flimsy construct the rest of us call reality, or realism, is no more than a memory. The narrator's name is Ruth Foster—the biblical exile, the home that is no home—and her final gesture enacts an escape from the human world and a dispersal into nature that are as unrepentant as they are terrifying.

When asked several years ago to name a living American writer she admires, Robinson offered Annie Dillard. Though the two are of an age, Dillard saw print first, and one can imagine Robinson poring over *Pilgrim at Tinker's Creek* and *Holy the Firm* during

William Deresiewicz is a Nation *contributing writer.*

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the years she was writing *Housekeeping*. The three books share a stringency of utterance, an inspired simplicity of metaphor, a force of idiosyncratic vision—above all, a sense of nature as aflame with divine beauty. But in the years after *Housekeeping*, new influences began to make themselves felt. Robinson taught at Amherst, then moved, in 1989, to the Iowa Writers' Workshop. Both relocations left their mark. An insatiable reader and profound student of the past, Robinson has written of trying to "piece together…a prehistory of the postmodern world" by immersing herself while at Amherst in the literature of political economy—Smith, Malthus, Carlyle, Marx—a course of instruction in the merciless self-justifications of modern capitalism. The center of her response, her ethical counterweight to materialism and social Darwinism, is Calvinism—not, in her account, the repressive theology of popular myth but a humane and humanistic philosophy of conscience. However nameless her religious emotions may have been when she was a child, Robinson has found in the tradition of her upbringing (both the Presbyterianism in which she was raised and the Congregationalism to which she has migrated are Calvinist churches) a highly articulated spiritual culture.

The abolitionists suffered for the values Robinson holds most dear: justice, equality, intellect.

But it was not until she got to Iowa that Robinson discovered her imaginative home. For it was there that she began to excavate the history of the Midwest, "a highly distinctive and crucial region," she writes in *The Death of Adam*, "which is very generally assumed to have neither culture nor history." The history she uncovered is the region's colonization, in the decades preceding the Civil War and under the impetus of the Second Great Awakening, by a cadre of Northeastern Calvinist abolitionists—Lyman Beecher and his family, Josiah Grinnell, John Brown and many others—who saw themselves as re-enacting the settlement of New England by their Puritan forebears. They preached, taught and fought; built towns, seminaries, schools and colleges; wrote sermons, pamphlets and books. In short, they stood and suffered for the very values Robinson holds most dear: justice, equality, freedom, intellect, learning. "There is no group in history," she writes, "that I admire more."

To judge from the essays in *The Death of Adam* and elsewhere, the abolitionists stand for Robinson at the apex of a larger history, a history of the rise and fall of the ideals of democratic government and humane culture. The narrative begins in the Middle Ages, with the "relative republicanism and autonomy" of "the great urban civilization of southern France and northern Italy" as well as the "popular, anti-hierarchical religious radicalism" epitomized by the Catharist heresy that flourished at the time in Languedoc. It then moves to sixteenth-century Catholic humanism—typified for Robinson by Marguerite de Navarre, the great writer, thinker and patroness who was queen to Henry of Navarre and sister to the king of France—the milieu from which Calvin sprang. In Marguerite and Calvin, Robinson detects the emergence of the modern self, with its absolute moral seriousness and intensively cultivated inwardness. From Calvin we go to John Milton, the great Puritan poet, and Jonathan Edwards, the great Puritan theologian. (Robinson may well see in Edwards and the First Great Awakening, with its democratic radicalism, the seeds of the revolution that followed a few decades later, though I know of nowhere where she makes that argument.) Then comes abolition, culminating in the Civil War—and then disaster. The horrors of the war led most abolitionists to moderate their egalitarian commitments, and modern thought, under the leadership of Darwin, Nietzsche and Freud, fell under the spell of, and remains to this day in thrall to, the pernicious doctrines of social Darwinism.

There is much to recommend this line of thinking, however uncongenial it may appear, especially to secular eyes. Robinson is right to insist, as she repeatedly does, that we take the time to find out what Calvin actually said and what his followers actually did rather than continuing to assent to the sound-bite stereotypes typically used to dismiss them. (She says the same about Jefferson and Thoreau, among others.) If we view the Puritan influence on American history as malign, she adds, all the more reason to educate ourselves about what it really involved. She is also right to call our attention to overlooked continuities in the history of progressive thought, and in particular to the Continental lineages of American culture. We really must stop being the world's biggest island. Finally—though this seems to be no part of her purpose—we should be grateful to anyone who can help nurture the nascent rapprochement between religious and secular progressivism, even at the cost in self-love that may be involved in acknowledging the origins of the second in the first. "Join or die" (to quote another Puritan) is a slogan worth reviving.

But Robinson's narrative will finally not do. Her own biases force her to omit too much. I will pass over her neglect of Enlightenment and Romantic progressivism, of Voltaire and Wollstonecraft, Wordsworth and Shelley. I will also pass over the injustice of reducing all of modern thought to the ideas of Darwin, Nietzsche and Freud, and the further injustice of reducing the ideas of Darwin, Nietzsche and Freud—especially the enormously complex and varied thought of the last two—to their social Darwinist elements. More important is her distortion of American history. For one thing, one would scarcely guess from Robinson's writing that there has ever been in the United States such a thing as a Catholic or a Jew, that the country has been home to vast populations of immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe (let alone other parts of the world) or that those groups have made any contribution to the nation's political and intellectual life. In fact, stray remarks suggest a kind of Anglo-Saxon tribalism on Robinson's part, connected, though not pardonably, with her profound attachment to the English language. She says of a particular word of uncertain etymology that it is "fetched from the deep anonymous heart of English generations" (as opposed, presumably, to words like "chutzpah" and "blarney," with their mongrel bloodlines) and remarks elsewhere that the "British dialect" is "no language of flatterers, in fact a reservoir of painful truth"—which would have come as a surprise to Swift, Orwell and pretty much every other satirist in the history of British letters.

That Robinson has lived most of her life, physically and imaginatively, in Idaho and Iowa, two of the least diverse states in the Union, is not enough to explain this omission. It can be seen instead as part of a larger one: the whole of American history after Reconstruction. The great tide of immigration is missing from Robinson's narrative, and so are two presidents named Roosevelt. Progressivism is missing. Liberalism is missing. Trustbusting, Social Security and the Voting Rights Act are missing. The revival of the ideal of equality by new generations, the heirs of both Lincoln and Marx; the vast growth of a broadly distributed prosperity during the middle decades of the twentieth century; the gradual social enfranchisement of African-Americans and female Americans,

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the very groups whose defense by the abolitionists Robinson is most keen to emphasize—all these are missing. Finally, the continuity of progressive ideals across American history: that is what is missing.

It is not hard to see why. Democratic, humane, enlightened ideals were not extinguished after the Civil War, by social Darwinism or anything else, but they did largely pass into secular hands. This is a fact that Robinson appears to be as comfortable thinking about as an atheist would be contemplating the virtues of John Calvin. It is one thing to believe that religion is a moral force in the world, quite another to believe that it is the only one. Robinson seems complicit in that common article of religious faith, at once a form of vanity and a kind of faulty syllogism, the idea that only religion can make people be good. In order to sustain it, she has had to avert her eyes from a very great deal indeed.

Gilead emerged directly from Robinson's new historical understandings and religious commitments. It is a story of Iowa, and Calvinism, and abolition. John Ames, the narrator, is offered as a kind of Congregational paragon, a living argument for the virtues, perhaps the supremacy, of Robinson's faith. He is pious, serious, studious and wise; loyal, loving, gentle and kind; broad-minded and largehearted, self-sacrificing and self-effacing. Perfect, in that he is not too perfect—he is flawed, but he wrestles with his flaws. Yet the effect is neither saccharine nor didactic. In this splendidly realized novel, Robinson meets one of the most difficult challenges of narrative art: she not only makes goodness believable; she also makes it interesting. The novel is framed as a letter to Ames's young son, and we follow the old pastor's deeply informed and responsible thinking as it shapes itself on the page. Here is a man who has spent his life turning things over in his mind, mixing experience, Scripture, memory, poetry, philosophy and feeling, in an endless conversation with himself. That he is dying only makes the world more lovely; that he has had to wait so long for love only makes life sweeter. Save for their emotional complexity and virtuosic consistency of tone, the mood and language could not be more different from that in *Housekeeping*. From the vertical extremes of Idaho we go to Iowa's broad, fertile plain. The passage from one novel to the next gives the sense of a hunted spirit that has found its rest in the peace of the Lord.

Still, there are shadows in this paradise. One is cast by Ames's grandfather, a fero-

WHY JESUS CHRIST WOULD NEVER, EVER VOTE REPUBLICAN

By
Richard John Siviur

This book constitutes a surgical dissection of the Republican Party, exposing it as the Party of Big Business, the POBB. Furthermore it is the Party of White Males, lacking even a single black member in Congress. (The Democrats have 44). The POBB's Congressional ranks contain few women, only 27, while the Democrats have 64.

George Bush is quickly revealed as the Thief-in-Chief, after he purposefully purloined the 2000 election. Coupled with him is Dick Cheney. The two, plotting furiously, manufactured a cause for war with Iraq where absolutely none existed. Truth quickly became a casualty. Bush has already secured his position as the nation's worst Chief Executive.

In January of 2009 we Democrats should view with great pride our first black President, Barack Obama, addressing Congress with its group of lily-white Republicans, sullen and resentful. Accompanying our new President will be a sense of exaltation as we Democrats await deliverance from Bush's reign of ruin.

For Democrats this book will be a rewarding, rich read and presented in a felicitous, scholarly manner. It presents the perfidious nature of the POBBs and their preference for white males.

The book has been exhaustively researched by an exuberant 85 year old, a life long Liberal Democrat and devotee to Franklin Delano Roosevelt. It is presented in a felicitous, scholarly manner but with withering scorn for Reactionary Republicans.

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cious abolitionist who made the pilgrimage from Maine after receiving a vision of Christ in chains. The Civil War did nothing to dampen his zeal, and the old man lived on into Ames's childhood (the novel is set in 1956), a standing rebuke to the damp spirits of latter days. The past, for Robinson, is always pressing in on the present. But the real snake in the garden is Jack Boughton, John Ames Boughton, Ames's namesake and godson and the son of his best friend, Gilead's Presbyterian minister. Jack, a wicked boy, has returned after twenty years of self-imposed exile—he had fathered and abandoned a child, now dead—and Ames grows increasingly nervous as Jack works his way into his son's and young wife's affections. Jack, who calls him Papa, is the son or self Ames doesn't want to own, and his presence continually wrong-foots him into jealousy and discourtesy. But Ames's biggest transgression is his misreading of Jack's motives. Jack hasn't returned to Gilead to take Ames's wife and child after he is gone but because he has a new child of his own, by a black mother, and he wants to find out whether the town, which was founded as an abolitionist redoubt in the struggle for Kansas, would give them welcome. Ames's reluctant admission that it probably wouldn't constitutes Robinson's most damning indictment of Gilead's—and, by implication, America's—moral decline.

Jack Boughton brings to *Home* the existential loneliness that blows through *Housekeeping*.

Home extends Robinson's exploration of Gilead's moral universe. The action is concurrent with that of the earlier novel, but the scene shifts to the Boughton home, the focus to Jack's relationship with his father and younger sister Glory, who has returned to Gilead after their mother's death to care for their father in his dotage. It is Jack who brings to the novel the same current of existential loneliness that blows through *Housekeeping*. The sins of his youth, it turns out, proceeded from a sense of dispossession imposed on him at birth. He simply never felt loved, never felt wanted, never even felt present—not in his large, boisterous family, not in the universe. In a novel as saturated with religion as this one is—the family's music of choice is the Presbyterian hymnal, characters quote Scripture with precision and wit, Jack is imaged by turns as the prodigal son, Esau and Lazarus—the circumstance inevitably raises theological questions. *Home* generally avoids replaying scenes from *Gilead*, but the one it does revisit—in fact, with considerable amplification—is a long argument between Jack and Ames over the doctrine of predestination. Why was Jack saddled at birth with a feeling of estrangement from God, a sense of ineradicable uncleanliness, that precludes him from communion with family, home, the human community? One of *Housekeeping*'s most persistent images is that of a lighted window seen from the outside, an image not of comfort but of exclusion. Here, Jack says of the house in which he grew up, "When I was a kid I used to wish I lived here. I used to wish I could just walk in the door like the rest of you."

Needless to say, the idea of home comes under as much pressure here as does the idea of housekeeping in the earlier novel. "Home," the novel reminds us, is an adverb as well as a noun. It means "at home" ("He won't be home much longer") and "just arrived at home" ("He's home!"). Both meanings, and many more, are forcefully active throughout the novel, especially since the story deals with adult children, for whom the idea of home is always fraught with ambivalences and ambiguities. "All of them call it home," old Boughton says of his many children, "but they never stay." Glory does her best to take her mother's place, but the alchemy of cooking smells and loyalty with which she tries to domesticate the heavy rooms into a semblance of remembered comfort never manages to come off. Besides, it's all she can do to make her brother feel like he even deserves to be there. In Robert Frost's "Death of the Hired Man," the farmer famously says, "Home is the place where, when you have to go there,/They have to take you in," but his wife replies, "I should have called it/Something you somehow haven't to deserve," and the two definitions serve pretty well to express the attitudes of Jack and Glory, respectively.

For this is Glory's novel as much as it is her brother's—more so, in a sense, since it is told from her perspective. Glory, too, has been out in the world and has returned, at 38, with thwarted intentions and a bruised heart. In explaining the genesis of *Gilead*, Robinson has said that for a long time she was trying to write a novel about a woman "abraded" by her experience of the world, until a peripheral character, Ames, took over, and that original story seems, more or less, to have been Glory's. Now it is paired with Jack's, and one of the novel's principal achievements is the subtlety and precision with which it choreographs their slow dance toward intimacy: the burden of grief and caution with which Glory approaches the brother she never really knew; her sense of bewilderment as she tries to comprehend his long experience of skid rows and self-betrayal; Jack's evasiveness and fragility; the self-deprecating charm that's become his habitual strategy of defense, apology and seduction. All evidence suggests that Robinson is a fiercely solitary soul, and one of the reasons she cites for having abandoned the earlier project is that she found herself trapped in an isolated voice like the one in *Housekeeping*. Here she uses a third-person narrator for the first time, and while it costs her the immediacy and verbal intensity that made her previous novels so compelling—the language of *Home*, except in dialogue, is relatively flat, its mode of psychological portraiture analytic rather than imagistic—it enables her to render relationships with a new depth. As the characters circle one another, the story moves from moment to moment of direct, gathered feeling.

The novel's most fraught relationship is Jack's with his father. As much as Jack tested Ames's commitment to the cardinal Christian principles of forgiveness and love, that is nothing compared with what he does to Boughton. The old man is so full of love, and so equally full of rage, that even his sweetest words of comfort twist helplessly back toward rebuke. There's an emotional carelessness about him that makes a minefield of every moment. Jack accepts it all as no more than his due, but the two just can't seem to get anywhere with each other. The past is simply too big to dislodge. Jack has changed too little, and Boughton must forget too much. The prodigal returns, and his father folds his arms; Lazarus rises, but the odor of his cerements offends. A huge sadness fills the novel: the widowed old man, dying in confusion and bitterness, and the two failed children, solacing each other with small acts of kindness because the big losses can't be assuaged. There may be balm in *Gilead*, but there is none here. "She wished it mattered more," the narrator says of Glory, "that the three of them loved one another." The allusion is to Christ's commandment "that you love one another," and the point is not, of course, to mock it but to remind us that it isn't ever easy, and isn't done often enough.

Finally, surrounding the domestic drama, there's the national passion play of race. It is 1956; Jack watches coverage of the Mont-

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gomery bus boycott, which his father dismisses as a lot of bad behavior. ("You can't have people running around the streets like that.") Another failure of Christian charity. But Robinson's engagement with the question ultimately seems halfhearted or, at least, truncated. The bus boycott, for her, seems to have more to do with the betrayal of abolition, ninety years earlier, than with the civil rights movement, of which it was an opening chapter. That movement was to become a signal example of interdenominational, indeed interreligious and religious-secular, common cause, but as we know, such things are not dreamt of in her philosophy. As an essayist, Robinson is brilliant in her areas of expertise, but she has taken little interest in contemporary American culture and displayed surprising ignorance about contemporary American society. "It seems to me," she writes in *The Death of Adam*, "we have almost stopped using the word ['democracy'] in a positive sense, preferring 'capitalism.'" This is nonsense, of course; "democracy" is still a universally professed ideal, and "capitalism" was long ago euphemized to "the free market." To judge from Ruth's age at the novel's conclusion and the fact that she seems to be Robinson's contemporary, *Housekeeping* also ends around 1956. Robinson's imagination appears to have advanced no further. This is fine, of course, as long as she follows her own advice and doesn't try to speak about what she doesn't know. But however uneven she is as an essayist—by turns magnificent and obtuse—she rules her fictional domain with absolute authority. Of the soul, and its wanderings, and its struggles to find a way home, she is a modern master. ■

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An 1877 cartoon depicting William Gladstone's fight in Parliament to censure the Ottoman regime

Spectacular Wrongs

by SAMUEL MOYN

Freedom's Battle
The Origins of Humanitarian Intervention.
By Gary J. Bass.
Knopf. 509 pp. $35.

The most troubling fact about international politics in the nineteenth century is not that moral appeals to save suffering humanity were absent but that they were commonplace. The British, who led the international campaign to end the slave trade, and then slavery, abused that credential by tirelessly citing their national moral superiority as a justification for imperial rule—including invasion and expansion. The crimes of savage peoples and backward states had to be stopped, and the British—self-styled agents of humane values—were the ones to do it. "Nations which are still barbarous," even liberal John Stuart Mill explained, "have not got beyond the period during which it is likely to be for their benefit that they should be conquered and held in subjection by foreigners." Among many other expressions of enlightened humanitarianism, such rhetoric justified numerous "small wars" in the hinterlands, where the civilizing constraints on armed conflict that Europeans had developed for their contests were neither suspended nor disobeyed because they did not apply in the first place. As Lytton Strachey might have put it, the history of Victorian humanitarianism will never be written: we know too much about it.

Gary Bass thinks otherwise. In *Freedom's Battle*, he claims that the European nineteenth century is a precious and neglected resource for anyone who wants to champion human rights in contemporary politics, especially when atrocities take place in distant lands, provided that the suffering is accurately depicted by a free and disinterested press and armed intervention is the only alternative to standing idly by while evildoers slaughter the innocent. Bass recovers a few early cases of humanitarian intervention he considers legitimate in order to supply today's humanitarians with a noble tradition that can be invoked to defend themselves against conservative realists, leftist anti-imperialists and academic nitpickers who doubt the virtues of "humanitarian intervention."

To his credit, Bass is aware of the long and sordid history in the West, going back to the European discovery of the New World and intensifying in the nineteenth century, of false claims to care about foreign evil and human suffering—and co-optations of true claims to false ends. Surveying the decidedly mixed history of intervention a century ago in the first English-language treatise on the subject, Ellery Stowell admitted that only a few invocations of humanity passed the straight-face test, since they typically featured high-minded rhetoric masking low-minded imperialism. "In this polite age," he wrote, "conquest is usually effected [through] war proclaimed to have been undertaken in defense of international law rights." The most notorious humanitarian imperialist of the polite age, probably, was King Leopold of Belgium, who took the gift of the Congo from the great powers, promising to eliminate vile slavery and bring civilization, then turned the country into his private extraction ranch and a nest of untold cruelty. Bass knows that Victorian humanitarianism often exported to foreign lands the savagery it purported to be banishing from them. He simply asks the reader to bracket such contradictions at the outset and see if anything noble is left to be salvaged; he wants us to acknowledge the generally tainted nature of nineteenth-century humanitarianism and move on. "There were

Samuel Moyn, who teaches European history at Columbia University, is working on a book about the recent history of human rights.

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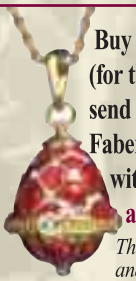

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some important episodes even in a horribly imperialistic age," he writes. "There were, and are, real universalists."

The cornerstones of Bass's argument are accounts of British outrage about Ottoman repression in Greece in the 1820s and in Bulgaria in the 1870s. Bass's main protagonists are Lord Byron and William Gladstone, cast as a selfless activist and a selfless politician, respectively. Byron agitated for Greek freedom fighters under the Muslim yoke, which became especially oppressive in a bloodbath on the island of Chios. Besides exciting an enthusiastic international fan club by relaying the Greek cries for help ("For foreign arms and aid they fondly sigh," he wrote in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*), Byron traveled to war and died a Romantic hero's death. Fifty years later, and out of office after a lost election, Gladstone staged what turned into a political comeback by drafting a heated denunciation of the savage Ottoman repression of Bulgarian nationalists and then pressuring Britain's conservative government to stop it, ultimately riding popular emotion all the way to a second term as prime minister. In both cases, intervention eventually led to local independence, at least for a while. Bass complements these British set pieces with accounts of the French expedition to Syria in the 1860s to save Christians from local depredations and Ottoman misrule, and international concern about the oppression of Armenians, once again at Ottoman hands, during the lead-up to World War I, when it became genocide.

One of Bass's rhetorical tools is to make the Ottoman massacres sound a lot like the Holocaust.

Bass's accounts of these events are well crafted, tacked down by vivid turns of phrase plucked from the prose of eminent Victorians. One of the most revealing of his rhetorical devices is to make the Ottoman massacres sound a lot like the Holocaust, though the former were, in the nineteenth century, more "ordinary" counterinsurgencies against territorially based bids for secession—themselves violent in their methods—in which the West took sides. Bass amusingly names the repression of the Greeks "A Problem from Hellas," a riff on the title of Samantha Power's well-known book about genocide, "*A Problem From Hell*", and he makes sure to convey that people at the time thought "immediate and total annihilation" was occurring, and that there was a grim plan "to extirpate systematically a whole community." He even finds Gladstone proclaiming, "Never again."

The "atrocitarian" cause may touch our hearts, but can cherry-picked cases really win over our minds about nineteenth-century do-goodery? It's a question worth asking, since Bass, after admitting he has bracketed much evidence that contradicts his heroic presentation of these episodes, goes on to champion them anyway. And whatever evidence of impure motives or mixed causes he does introduce, he excuses. Of course the Victorians were arrogant, Bass readily admits, and given their imperial consciousness, it may be that they wanted to soften their hegemony with some humanitarianism. But establishing hegemony through political influence, culture and markets is different from running an empire, he explains, and once in a while Europeans forswore formal rule. The most remarkable feature of *Freedom's Battle* is that its author is constantly apologizing for the very heroes he claims he can surgically extract from the compromising circumstances of their times. In a pamphlet denouncing the Bulgarian atrocities, Gladstone offered a farrago of Christianity and racism, Bass records. These facts make Gladstone's words "an unlikely kind of Magna Carta for the human rights movement," he concedes, but he treats it as one all the same, as if writing history were about skimming the dross off the parts you like.

Some vital roots of humanitarianism are left unexcavated in *Freedom's Battle*, and they reach back to the Protestant revolution of sentiment in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The revolution began when Protestant divines started to emphasize the importance of good works and the feelings of pity on which they were based. The idea was that while the project of reforming the world in a Christian spirit could not directly compel God to elect you, it would prepare Christian communities for salvation and demonstrate to God their eligibility for it. The key ingredient of this revolution was sympathy, the capacity to identify with the suffering of others, which enabled charitable practices to be built on an interior emotional and spiritual foundation.

In eighteenth-century Britain, this revolution sparked an explosion of compassion in intellectual circles and popular culture. Partly secularized in the so-called sentimentalist philosophy of David Hume and Adam Smith and in the sentimental novels of Samuel Richardson and Laurence Sterne, the new emotional code became an established fixture among European and even American elites by the turn of the nineteenth century. "Nature hath implanted in our breasts a love of others, a sense of duty to them, a moral instinct, in short, which prompts us irresistibly to feel and to succor their distresses," Thomas Jefferson wrote in a letter to Thomas Law in 1814. Bill Clinton was not the first president of the United States to feel your pain.

Bass associates such modern fellow-feeling with liberal solidarity, but the proposition is dubious, unless liberalism is defined in a historically careful way. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, sympathy was usually a manifestation not of egalitarian solidarity with downtrodden strangers but of noblesse oblige. As the literary historian Lynn Festa has shown, humanitarianism established in the imagination powerful hierarchical relationships between the compassionate and the suffering, and worked in tandem with imperial and market expansion. There is more than a trace of these origins in Bass's suggestion that atrocities basically happen elsewhere, and in distant lands, with the result that great powers (which is to say, advanced countries) will never lose their assigned role of guarding against the ever threatening scandal of barbarity. "Massacres turn out to be the regular way of the world," Bass writes. Bloodbaths occurred in "remote places like Greece and Bulgaria" a century ago, and they crop up in "some far-off corner of the globe" today. If you printed it on a bumper sticker, the slogan would be: Stop the Violence—Over There.

As it became a political ethos, guiding a vast array of private activities as well as state action (sometimes military), sentimental humanitarianism fell prey to four interlocking syndromes. First, sentimentalism promoted a culture of sensationalism. "The roots of British interventionism lay in Printing-House Square," Bass says. True, but so did the roots of a lot of other things. As activists churned out stories and pictures of suffering for their middle-class publics, they invited the charge that their daily accounts of outrage abroad merely excited readers instead of goading them to action. Sometimes the inundation of the public sphere with narratives and pictures of corporal violence had quite counterintuitive results: one of the first diagnosed sadists in history was a man who found the humanitarian depiction of tortured slaves sexually exciting.

Accentuating the positive, Bass contends that there is a lawlike correlation—at least in a liberal state—between press coverage, meaningful compassion and beneficent intervention. Remarkably, Bass sidesteps

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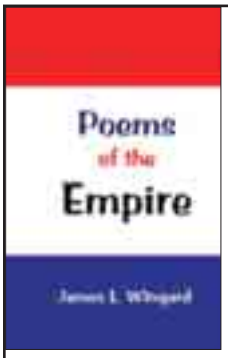

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the important debate about the effects of the representation of suffering in words and pictures; he doesn't grapple at all with the question of whether the daily repetition of sensationalist content can cause "compassion fatigue." Bass's case studies inadvertently illustrate that journalistic coverage of humanitarian crises abroad may have trafficked in self-congratulatory rhetoric and racist stereotypes, but he doesn't account for these shortcomings in his highly idealized portrait of the media. To do so would have wrecked his hypothesis that free states with a free press are by nature well positioned to promote humanity abroad.

The second syndrome is that humanitarians have been drawn in by the spectacle of blood, with the structural causes of the violence, and the consequences of intervention, exciting less emotion. Humanitarianism has not opposed suffering universally; most often, it has fastened on extravagant bodily violation and pain. Again, the Christian roots of modern pity—with Jesus' Passion setting the terms of emotional identification—are clear here. For this reason, torture, slavery, atrocity and (more recently) rape have gotten humanitarian attention. Then as now, humanitarianism ended up revealing explosive spectacles of suffering at the price of concealing their political, social and cultural conditions, including Western involvement in it. Vivid imagery beamed from far away—like stories sent by telegraph in an earlier era—leaves the misleading impression that you aren't already there. Victorians weren't troubled by such dilemmas because they assumed that peoples of other cultures, or colors, were simply prone to inhumanity. We are not Victorians, yet Bass seems uninterested in why the "way of the world," with all its inequalities in suffering, was the way it was—and why it is the way it is. All of Bass's showcase episodes are more the prisoner of this syndrome than they are analyses of it: they begin with sketchy political background, then turn to the main event of "the massacre" in order to reach the point of necessary aid.

Third, sentimentalism was profoundly selective, not just in the kinds of problems it targeted but also in the types of people who deserved pity. Sometimes concern about distant atrocities screened out the suffering of those closer to home. In a chapter of *Bleak House* called "Telescopic Philanthropy," Charles Dickens writes about a prim humanitarian named Mrs. Jellyby, who decries distant suffering to the skies while remaining oblivious to the family chaos under her roof. Similarly, when premier humanitarian Florence Nightingale broke the hearts of the British with her appeal to help suffering soldiers during the Crimean War (at least, those on their side), a skeptic asked, "If the veil had been lifted up here [in London] from the last two months of cholera and the whole truth had been told about the sufferings of the poor in their ill-provided dwellings a picture far more harrowing even than that from Constantinople might easily have been drawn. But cui bono?" Of course, helping one person always involves ignoring another, but neither in humanitarianism until recently nor in Bass's book is the itinerary to the latest massacre compared with the road not taken.

Even within the domain of foreign policy and high politics, humanitarian identification happened selectively, as Bass can't help but show. Though all of his case studies are about Christians beset by Muslims (and Druse, in the case of Syria), Bass circles round in the end to implying that there was no tight correlation between Christianity and compassion during the nineteenth century. His argument loses its moorings, however, as he struggles with the impossible (and self-imposed) mission of bracketing Gladstone's Christian vision of the world order. Given the considerable evidence his book provides that the Christian identity of the victims mattered to humanitarians, the few other cases Bass can cite are the proverbial exceptions that confirm the rule. He insists that the cause of British identification with the Greeks was not their Christianity but some sense of connection between the Greek origins of Western civilization and the present Greek cause, as if this argument made the identification less selective. By and large, atrocities in the nineteenth century were other people's atrocities. This makes it an odd period to get excited about. In the end it is confusing why Bass takes Victorian solicitude for humanity so seriously when his book proves Victorians never saw humanity beyond the fringes of Europe—except, of course, when they proclaimed the need to bring European civilization there.

Finally, sentimentalist politics—including humanitarian intervention—can be profoundly myopic. No one can doubt that it speaks well of humanitarian activists in a post-Holocaust era that they call for the defense of the innocent abroad against outrageous treatment. Usually, however, Western statesmen who advocate for intervention to combat atrocity are embroiled in a more complicated game, as Bass often stresses. In the nineteenth century, the game was the famous "Eastern question," and its prize, not always formal, of course, was control of the Ottoman borderlands. Often, things are more complex on the ground, even when (as in Darfur today) local struggle is so lopsided that counterinsurgency slides into genocide. Sentimentalism, which teaches you to see

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"humanity," often obscures a knottier politics of nationality or ethnicity. It has become a regular occurrence that after powerful outsiders intervene to restrain killing, the victims typically angle not for universal rights but for local power grabs. Indeed, in an important long dispatch from Kosovo published in July in the *London Review of Books*, Jeremy Harding suggests that the diminishment of the West's sentimental investment in Kosovo, combined with local dynamics and festering grievances, have practically guaranteed that political parochialism, along with economic stagnation, poverty and graft, will prevail there. Bass's case studies show that the plight of the suffering couldn't be separated from overarching imperial rivalries and awakening national sentiments, but tellingly, his stories tail off after the atrocity is put down. In sum, humanitarian myopia screens out a lot of local dynamics from a crisis, the better to wade into it with heartfelt compassion but deplorable ignorance.

None of these syndromes seem real when you are in their grip. Humanitarians are often tempted—Bass certainly is—to believe that anyone doubtful about their politics is simply lazy or immoral. He claims that liberals are the only ones who really care about the suffering, and that progressives who worry about the global ramifications of humanitarian causes as well as the local dynamics of an intervention and its potential political impact end up closely resembling conservatives who argue for noninterventionist restraint. "Realism," Bass writes, "aligns with radical leftism." But critics and skeptics who highlight the shortcomings of humanitarianism may have more suffering, not less, in their sights.

As a history written after the fall of Communism, Bass's tale neglects perhaps the most important point about humanitarianism, which is that there have been many alternative versions of it. Through the twentieth century, indeed, it was not liberal but leftist humanitarianism that appealed to the "wretched of the earth," who have typically been suspicious of Western "solidarity," and for good reason. But my point is not that what the suffering have desired is obviously more plausible. It is the more disquieting possibility that humanitarianism, while universal in its rhetoric, has always turned out to be a specific political project in practice. If this interferes with the search for a glorious tradition, perhaps the search makes no sense. All the same, nineteenth-century history teaches that many people desired a version of humanitarianism beyond the form they knew.

And we should sympathize, for we have not even begun to think about how to save compassion from its perversions. Ultimately, the deep past provides little guidance in thinking about how to reform humanitarianism, except for the all-important starting point of its syndromes. For his part, Bass brackets and qualifies suspect motives in order to make the balance sheet work out, and he is comfortable with a humanitarianism that was and remains the creature of great-power politics, with all that entails. Moralizing the great powers, as Bass wants to do, risks glamorizing them. If humanitarian moralizing does not go further, and simply accepts the way of the world that makes humanitarianism necessary, then it is bound to be unconvincing: a spoonful of idealistic sugar will not make the medicine of power go down.

But perhaps it is wrong to read *Freedom's Battle* as a study of the nineteenth century, since a closer look suggests it is really about the last decade of the twentieth century and the early years of the twenty-first. Like Samantha Power, Bass started out his career as a journalist activated, after the rise of Holocaust memory, by the outbreak of atrocities in the Balkans in the 1990s. He is now a trained political scientist, and he is officially concerned with combating what in his discipline is called realism, with Benjamin Disraeli, Gladstone's nemesis, taking the place of Henry Kissinger. But the animating spirit of Bass's book is not so much any professional agenda as it is the desire to vindicate the model of moral engagement of its author's youth—and of a whole generation. The model is one in which, when idealistic activism succeeds, *The New Republic* begs for defense of the suffering, and Bill Clinton (eventually) responds. As an *apologia pro vita sua*, Bass's book is intended to vindicate those who burn with moral passion and believe that they selflessly want only to protect innocents from slaughter, even to the point that they need to pressure a powerful state to bring itself (and its armies) to bear. Humanitarians "just want to resist atrocity," Bass maintains.

Only six years ago, more than a few liberal hawks were impressed enough by that model to invoke it as a rationale for invading Iraq and destroying Saddam's rape rooms and torture chambers (to use the rhetoric of the day). Some humanitarian defenders of the Iraq aggression, having soiled their reputations by mistakenly depicting it as "freedom's battle," have simply apologized—as Michael Ignatieff did in 2007 in an embarrassingly vacuous piece in *The New York Times Magazine*. Bass's position is that he was never fooled into believing Iraq counted as a humanitarian cause. "The promotion of human rights was a side benefit," he explains. ("It weighed more heavily in the

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minds of some of the war's backers," he admits.) In other words, Bass insists that if you choose your humanitarian causes wisely, and really mean to help, there won't be anything to be sorry about.

You will, of course, have to tread carefully, and Bass claims that the nineteenth century is helpful here, too, for policy wonks boning up for the next humanitarian mission. It shows, he claims, "how the practice of humanitarian intervention can be *managed*." Briefly, you only think about intervening when you know you won't ignite a tinderbox; then you make sure to forge a multilateral consensus and do everything you can to avoid the appearance of ulterior motives; finally, you get out as soon as possible.

The first part of the prescription involves a healthy incorporation of realism, leading to the paradoxical consequence that Bass advocates intervention only for those victims whose executioners are not powerful enough to repel or complicate a humanitarian mission, or who are not protected by those powerful enough to do so. Bass shies away from proclaiming the "responsibility to protect," which seemed, a few short years ago, to be the emerging norm of the humanitarian ethos; here he illustrates, once again, that he advocates a moralist's tweak to great-power cynicism rather than a full-scale alternative to it. The clearest example of the prescription's multilateral element is Bass's case study of the French-initiated intervention in Syria in 1860: Maronite Christians joined a civil war against their Druse neighbors; the Ottomans, who sided with the Druse (many Muslims joined in the killing), failed to put the lid back on the crisis. When the French public went berserk, demanding intervention after local Christians and their missionaries died, the British stayed calm. With their greater liberalism and freer press, Bass explains, the British could see this conflict in more even-handed terms. But after some hesitation, the British did play a role, especially in the diplomacy of the intervention, and they prevented the French from treating the cause of humanity as a pretext for a land grab.

As interesting as the case is, it feels like instrumental history. It's not just that Bass's other cases don't work as well. During the 1990s, when Samantha Power and others treated multilateralism as a recipe for inaction, the implication was that the United States might need to act alone, without the sanction of the UN, to stop atrocities, a view Power codified in 2003 in "*A Problem From Hell*". Power's recent biography of Sergio Vieira de Mello, *Chasing the Flame*, now extols multilateralism as a device of legitimacy. Bass's history reflects this learning, with the nineteenth century presented as an era when the great powers struck the right balance between multilateral consent and unilateral leadership. But one is left with the question of why history matters if the lessons you call on it to teach simply affirm the policy wisdom you actually reached by living through disaster.

What has clearly survived the Iraq debacle is belief not just in anyone's leadership but in the United States' especially. When Bass surveys American history, he exempts the country from the purely European practice of pursuing empire in the name of humanity. He even labels the tail end of the late nineteenth century, when the United States began nibbling at Spain's old imperial possessions (much the way Europeans had done with the Ottoman fringes), a "period of imperial temptation" only. Is this remotely plausible? Either way, it's clear that Americans have shown themselves since that time to be quick studies in Victorian rhetoric: "We unsheathed the sword…in the name of humanity," as Senator (and future President) Warren Harding described the Cuban invasion of 1898 in retrospect, "and we gave proof to the world at that time of an unselfish nation." In his chapters on the United States, however, Bass chooses to fault the country only with the sin of inaction, saddled as it was by politicians, from John Quincy Adams to Woodrow Wilson, who failed to act on the humanitarian solidarity that the country's constitutional liberalism and free press should have required, at least according to Bass's theory.

Even if you think the problem is inaction, you have to treat the risks of calls for humanitarian intervention as seriously as you do the complacency you allege in those who do not sign up. It's misleading to reduce the ethos of humanitarian intervention to the mission in Iraq, but that does not mean they were entirely unrelated. Echoing a point made by Stephen Holmes in these pages (see "The War of the Liberals," November 14, 2005), Bass points out that Saddam would have been taken down even if many humanitarians had not joined the call for blood—which they certainly did. Even so, their support contributed to the public legitimacy of America's war at a crucial moment, and for a depressingly long time. As much as humanitarian collusion in the Iraq debacle, the use of compassion as a language of international politics, which exploded during the 1990s, is in dire need of re-examination. You may protest that you meant well when you unsheathed the sword. But the sword is double-edged, never more so than when someone who lacks your good intentions gets to swing it. ■

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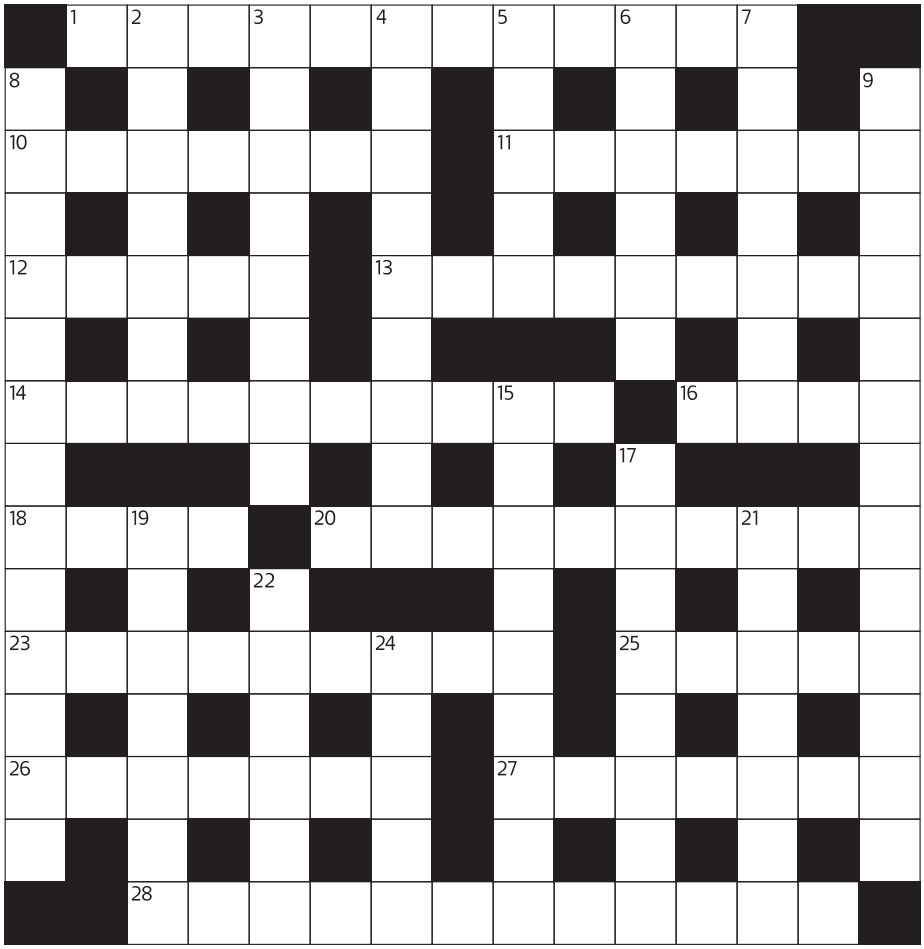

ACROSS

1 Nasty little kids, with one who tears inside out, and takes potshots. (12)

10 What you are if they said you did wrong. (7)

11 Jocular, with what goes with a wig on the old movie star. (7)

12 Dropsy, to a point made wrong. (5)

13 When you hit it in the plane, you might hit the ceiling if your seat belt isn't on! (3,6)

14 A fool, backward in North Carolina, briefly comes to a mystical utterance with the inside information. (10)

16 Nothing to write about which is not closed. (4)

18 What's the point to the ref being like, well, with water. (4)

20 A well-known movie they used to go by. (10)

23 "George Gordon"—by Reagan. (4,5)

25 Hoarded by Squirrel and Moose? No, but a close relative. (5)

26 Fixes things up in concrete. (7)

27 One of the first things a school kid had to confront. (7)

28 Athenian dramatist whose uncertain airs went on top of Shane, also uncertain. (12)

DOWN

2 Relative article, called out by lepers. (7)

3 One with a will, obviously, and an examination at a high point. (8)

4 The kind of treatment big shots might expect. (3,6)

5 Not so old if one were holding it. (5)

6 One from the pen takes a long time to get the bird. (6)

7 What you do with decals is pure robbery! (5-2)

8 Find the proper spot—but a stand-in might. (4,4,5)

9 Just a wild guess, but you can't see who fired it. (4,2,3,4)

15 One seated on the bench has to pull it out to make music, but it's not from the bottom of your heart! (5,4)

17 Matches a mixed-up plan's outlines. (8)

19 Pa's partner is on the edge, to a degree, but it might be played well. (7)

21 She was changed into a spider for her presumption as a weaver. (7)

22 It might be a turn to have a bash on one—one from Africa. (6)

24 Uprooted trees to plant again. (5)

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B	L	E	S	S	E	D	■	C	O	W	S	L	I	P
A	■	A	■	P	■	I	■	H	■	I	■	A	■	O
T	A	R	R	I	E	S	■	O	P	T	I	M	A	L
H	■	L	■	L	■	E	■	W	■	H	■	A	■	A
T	R	I	A	L	■	A	N	D	■	E	R	R	O	R
U	■	E	■	■	■	S	■	E	■	■	■	C	■	I
B	U	R	Y	T	H	E	■	R	E	T	A	K	E	S
■	■	■	■	H	■	■	■	■	■	A	■	■	■	■
C	L	O	S	E	T	S	■	N	O	M	A	R	C	H
U	■	P	■	■	■	T	■	A	■	■	■	E	■	A
T	H	U	M	B	■	A	R	T	■	F	A	C	E	T
L	■	L	■	E	■	T	■	U	■	A	■	L	■	C
A	V	E	R	A	G	E	■	R	E	T	O	U	C	H
S	■	N	■	N	■	L	■	E	■	A	■	S	■	E
S	A	T	I	S	F	Y	■	S	A	L	I	E	N	T

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VOL. CLVIII....No. 35 Natural Science News "For Your Health"

Breaking Research News

Life is short...or maybe not.

Top Harvard researcher says it's "the Holy Grail of aging research."*

Don't wait for the drug companies to drive the price through the roof; get the benefits of this breakthrough *natural* extract for pennies a day!

BOSTON, MA—Leading medical scientists are learning that resveratrol, a natural substance found in red wine, is rewriting the rules on the science of aging.

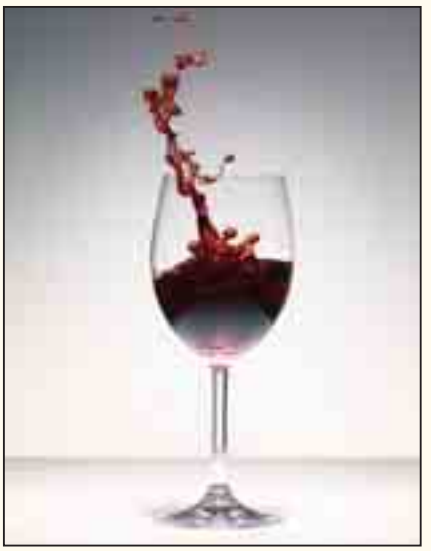
Researchers at the **Harvard Medical School** and the **National Institute on Aging** already discovered that the red wine extract offset the negative effects of a high-calorie diet in mice and significantly extends their life span (*NY Times*, Nov 2, 2006). Now, the latest research indicates that resveratrol may been even more powerful than first anticipated.

At this moment, drug companies are rushing to create prescription drugs that mimic the awesome health benefits of this simple natural extract. A leading pharmaceutical company has already spent $760,000,000 on purchasing the research and development.

The powerful secret of tomorrow's anti-aging pill can be yours today.

You may have thought that an anti-aging pill would only be available far into the future. But the effects of resveratrol have been proven as scientific fact... today. Even better, resveratrol is a naturally-occurring substance found in the skin of grapes and red wine, not manufactured in some laboratory. The key to living longer may be found inside your favorite bottle of red wine.

But don't try to drink yourself healthy, because it would take **50 bottles day**! Now there is a way to take resveratrol without the alcohol, calories and high cost. Vinotrol™, with 50mg of resveratrol derived from grapes and roots, provides the equivalent of the resveratrol in **278 five ounce glasses of Pinot Noir.**



"We have something (resveratrol) that **extends the life of every species** it's (been) given to. We're 50 years ahead of where I'd thought we would be 10 years ago," said a leading professor of pathology at Harvard Medical School, reported by the *NY Times*.

Such a potent concentrate delivers all of resveratrol's remarkable benefits, promoting circulation, blood flow, immune system, energy and healthy arteries.

Has the "The French Paradox" finally been explained?

Resveratrol is conjectured to be a partial explanation for "The French Paradox," the puzzling fact that people in France enjoy a high-fat diet yet suffer less heart disease than Americans and live significantly longer lives (in some cases up to 40%).

Even though French diets are crammed with loads of bread, cheese, rich cream sauces and decadent desserts... the resveratrol in red wine may have acted as their secret weapon. It is thought that the resveratrol protected them against unhealthy triglycerides, high cholesterol and skyrocketing blood pressure.

Trick your body into "aging in slow motion"

Reduction in cholesterol, body fat and oxidation is believed to help slow the age process considerably. Not only will you feel better, but the powerful antioxidants in Vinotrol™ will help fight the premature signs of aging. Resveratrol will help protect the collagen and elastin in your skin, which can lead to fewer wrinkles and a more youthful appearance.

Can you live years longer and feel years younger?

What's the point in living longer if you're not going to live better? Resveratol floods your system with powerful antioxidants and helps flush out lipids and free radicals. Combined with the extra boost to your brain, immune system and everyday energy, you'll wonder how you ever went without this red wine wonder.

Don't wait decades for giant drug conglomerates to figure out a way to charge you a fortune for the same benefits you can get for pennies on your own. Call today!

Having a Hard Time Finding Vinotrol™?

The manufacturer and the laboratories of Vinotrol™ are so confident in their anti-aging technology that they are offering a 30-day, risk-free trial offer. You must call immediately to qualify for the limited number of trials that are available. Start your new anti-aging program today with your risk-free supply of Vinotrol™ (50 mg resveratrol) for just a small s&h fee. Call toll-free 888-587-9420.

Call 888-587-9420 to get your Vinotrol™ 30-Day Risk Free Trial Offer Today!
Mention Promotion Code 2VNN11A for a Free Upgrade!

Harvard Medical School, Johns Hopkins, Salk Institute and UC Davis Medical Research Proves That Powerful Red Wine Extract Holds the Secret to Living a Longer, Healthier and More Vibrant Life

*These statements have not been evaluated by the FDA. This product is not meant to diagnose or treat any disease. Vinotrol is not endorsed, associated or affiliated in any way with Harvard University, Johns Hopkins, Salk Institute or UC Davis Medical. * CBS News, Nov 1, 2006*

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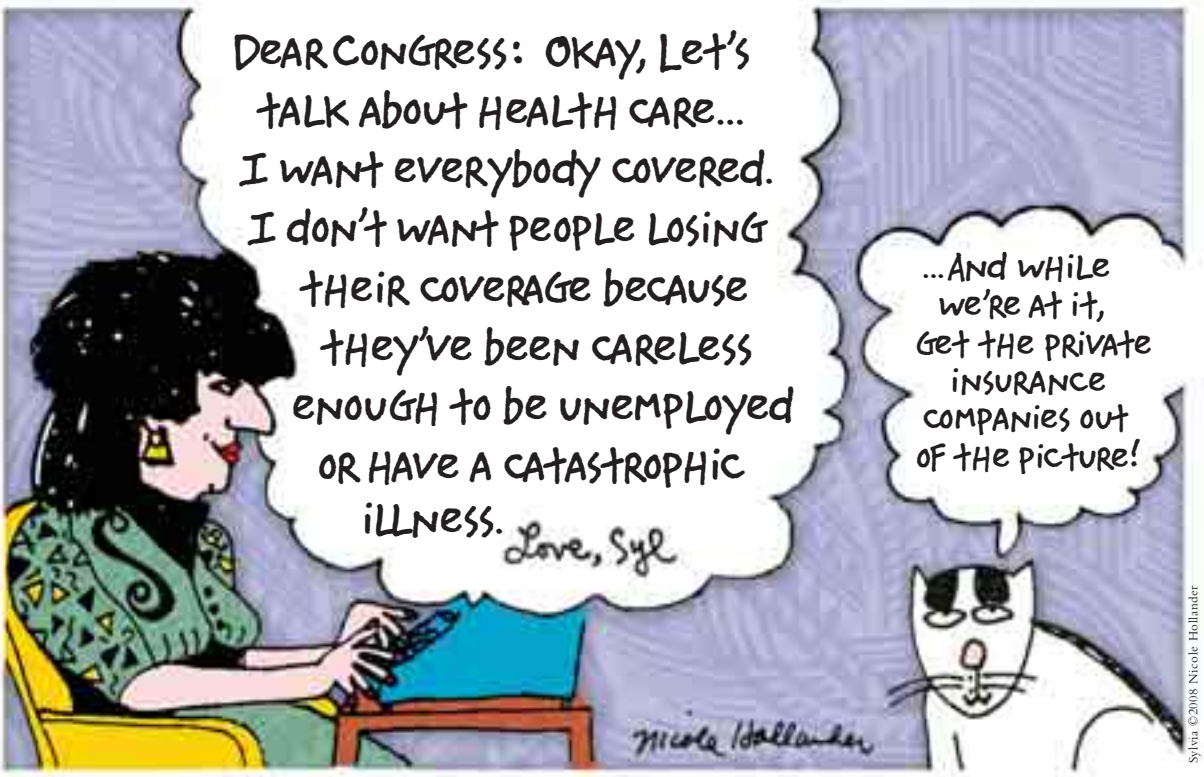
Dear Congress: Okay, Let's talk about health care... I want everybody covered. I don't want people losing their coverage because they've been careless enough to be unemployed or have a catastrophic illness. Love, Syl
...And while we're at it, get the private insurance companies out of the picture!
Nicole Hollander
Sylvia ©2008 Nicole Hollander

Physicians to the candidates: Enact single-payer health reform

America's health care system is failing. It denies care to many in need and is expensive, error-prone and increasingly bureaucratic.

Despite abundant medical resources, care is often inadequate because of **the irrationality of our insurance system.** Yet our political leaders seem intent on reprising failed schemes from the past, rejecting the single-payer national health insurance model that is the sole hope for affordable, comprehensive coverage.

Single payer reform could realize administrative savings of more than $300 billion annually — enough to cover the uninsured and to eliminate co-payments and deductibles for all Americans. It would also slow cost increases by fostering coordination and planning.

The incremental changes suggested by most Democrats cannot solve our problems; further pursuit of market-based strategies, as advocated by Republicans, will exacerbate them. **What needs to be changed is the system itself.**

We urge our political leaders to stand up for the health of the American people and implement a nonprofit, single-payer national health insurance system.

PNHP PHYSICIANS FOR A NATIONAL HEALTH PROGRAM

To get the full text of our "Open Letter to the Candidates on Single Payer Health Reform" signed by more than 5,000 physicians, including some of the most prominent leaders in medicine, or to make a tax-deductible donation to this reform effort, call ***877.782.6006****, visit* ***www.pnhp.org/open****, or write PNHP, 29 E. Madison St., Suite 602, Chicago, IL 60602.*

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